



How Other Shoppers and Shopping Motives Shape Shopping Behavior

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Introduction Considerable research emphasis is placed on effects of social influences on consumption. While a traditional research focus has been on interactive social influences (e.g., interactions with salesperson or reference groups) (e.g., Bearder & Etzel, 1982; Mangleburg, Doney, & Bristol, 2004), noninteractive social influences have begun to receive research attention; only a handful of studies on the role of unknown others (e.g., mere presence of others) exist (Argo, Dahl, & Manchanda, 2005), leaving many questions unanswered (e.g., its nature and potential moderators and/or mediators). The purpose of this study is to enhance our current understanding of noninteractive social influence by examining: (1) how perceived relevance with others, an unexplored noninteractive social factor, impacts consumers' emotions and cognition which lead to satisfaction and (2) if shopping motives moderate the effect of perceived relevance with others on emotions and cognition in the context of traditional shopping malls in the US.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses This study builds on Social Impact Theory (SIT; Latané, 1981), which suggests that not only the real but also imagined or implied existence of a social presence (e.g., other people) have impact on an individual. The theory states that social impact that social presence (source) has on an individual (target) is determined by 1) the strength (relevance), 2) the immediacy (proximity), and 3) the number (social size) of the impact source. To date, research has examined the effects of two conditions (number, immediacy) of the source and their impact on emotions and behavior (Argo et al., 2005; Zhou & Soman, 2003); the source strength (relevance) has not yet been studied and is our focus. When people think or feel that other shoppers in the same retail space are similar to themselves (i.e., a high level of perceived relevance with others), such associative interpretation would stimulate their cognitive (positive disconfirmation) as well as emotional (pleasure and arousal) processes in ways that improve shopping satisfaction. Thus, increasing perceived relevance with other shoppers will likely increase positive disconfirmation and positive emotions, which will lead to satisfaction (H1). Furthermore, the effect of perceived relevance with others on the cognitive and emotional processes may be dependent on individual characteristics, namely, utilitarian and hedonic shopping motives. Shoppers with hedonic motives are likely to actively use social presence as a relevant and important piece of information because their shopping goal is to enjoy the shopping experience. Contrarily, shoppers with high utilitarian motives are likely to consider other shoppers in the shopping mall as irrelevant and peripheral because their goal is to complete the shopping task efficiently. Together, we predict that hedonic shopping motives would moderate social presence effect on positive disconfirmation while utilitarian shopping motives would moderate such effect on emotions. Therefore, for high (vs. low) hedonic shoppers, the social presence effect on positive disconfirmation will be strengthened while, for high (vs. low) utilitarian shoppers, perceived relevance with others will have a weaker impact on emotion (H2).

Methodology We used 513 responses gathered from online surveys with US consumers (mean age = 45 years; females = 50.9%) for data analysis. Participants completed survey questions based on their recent experience with a traditional retail shopping mall. SEM (H1) and a series of moderated regression analyses (H2) were employed. Prior to hypotheses testing, a measurement model was assessed using CFA with the ML estimation. The measurement model fitted the data well. Reliabilities, convergent and discriminant validity were also satisfactory.

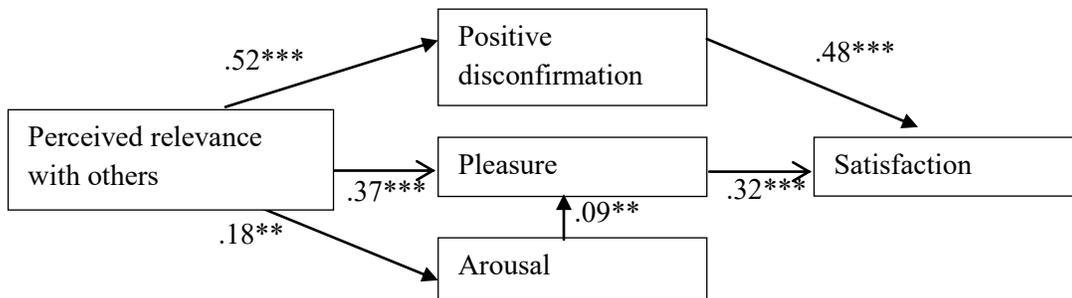


Figure 1. Resulted model. *Note.* Numbers are standardized factor loadings. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Results and Discussion As expected, perceived relevance positively affects positive disconfirmation, pleasure, and arousal. Additionally, positive confirmation and pleasure increase shopping satisfaction. However, arousal has no impact on satisfaction directly but rather indirectly via pleasure (Figure 1). H2 is supported by moderated regression analyses results. Utilitarian shopping motive significantly moderates the perceived relevance - arousal relationship ($p = .02$) but not the pleasure ($p = .67$) and cognition relations ($p = .29$). Hedonic shopping motive moderates the perceived relevance and positive disconfirmation relationship ($p = .02$) but neither pleasure ($p = .94$) nor arousal relations ($p = .12$). Simple slope analyses reveal that effect of perceived relevance with other shoppers on arousal is weaker for shoppers with high utilitarian motives (slope = .13) than for those with low utilitarian motives (slope = .32). Also, perceived relevance has a stronger influence on positive disconfirmation for shoppers with high hedonic motives (slope = .25) than for those with low hedonic motives (slope = .17). This research contributes to the literature on social influence and on retail marketing by providing evidence of perceived relevance with others as well as an understanding of conditions under which its impacts on consumer responses are moderated by shopping motives.

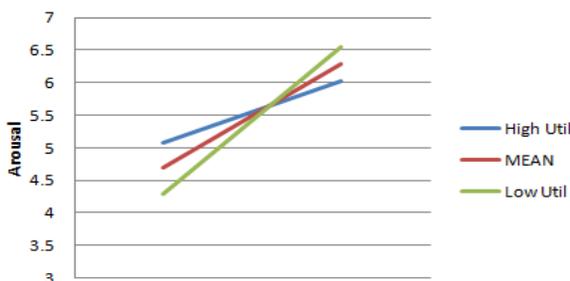


Figure 2. Moderating effects: Utilitarian motives

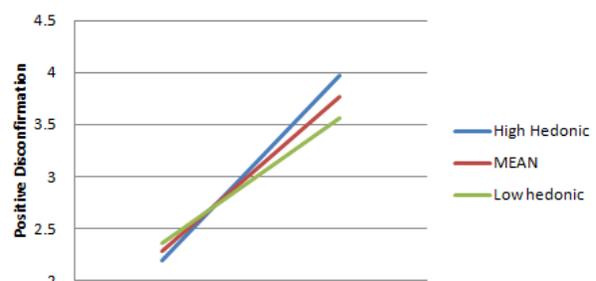


Figure 3. Moderating effects: Hedonic motives