Exploring the Role of Shopping Efficacy on Customer Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions

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In the present research, we introduce a new construct, shopping efficacy: the degree to which one can efficiently find a particular product for which one is shopping. We propose that shopping efficacy will differentiate customers and will influence overall satisfaction and subsequently behavioral responses to the satisfaction episode. Indeed, the results indicate that shopping efficacy has a direct impact on overall satisfaction and that those high in shopping efficacy are more likely to talk about the experience. The positive relationship between shopping efficacy and overall satisfaction significantly influences consumers’ intentions to repeat purchase and make recommendations.

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Research has conceptually and empirically augmented customer satisfaction models with antecedents and mediating satisfaction constructs. Abstract desires (Spreng, MacKenzie, and Olshavsky 1996) and multi-channel awareness and usage (Wallace, Giese, and Johnson 2004) impact customer satisfaction. Satisfaction with product and service attributes (Mittal, Kumar, and Tsiros 1999; Oliver
1993), satisfaction with the process and choice (Tanner 1996; Zhang and Fitzsimons 1999), and utilitarian and hedonic judgments (Mano and Oliver 1993) influence the overall customer satisfaction response. These findings have greatly enhanced researchers’ and managers’ understanding of customer satisfaction. Yet, important satisfaction questions still remain; the general focus of this research is to examine the role of the customer in customer satisfaction.

Current satisfaction research considers that customer differences may have a strong impact on the satisfaction process, the satisfaction response, and the resulting consequences. Mittal and Kamakura (2001) identified three possible customer characteristics: satisfaction thresholds, response bias tendencies, and nonlinearity between satisfaction ratings and repurchase behavior. Similar to satisfaction thresholds, Grace (2005) found consumer differences in disposition toward satisfaction. In the present research, we introduce a new construct, shopping efficacy, proposing that shopping efficacy will differentiate customers and will influence overall satisfaction and subsequently behavioral responses to the satisfaction episode.

Shopping efficacy is defined as the degree to which one can efficiently find a particular product for which one is shopping. Some people are able to buy a product they need or want without spending as much time as others. These consumers know which products and brands they are going to buy as well as where to purchase these products. As such, consumers who are high in shopping efficacy do not take as much time to locate and purchase products, relative to others and relative to the type of product. For these consumers, shopping efficacy is salient across different retail channels.

Previous studies have identified several kinds of market experts, including opinion leaders (Rogers and Cartono, 1962), market mavens (Feick and Price, 1987), and consumer innovators (Steenkamp, Hofstede, and Wedel 1999). These market experts may or may not be efficient at shopping. Similar to market mavens and opposed to opinion leaders and consumer innovators, efficient shoppers are not tied to a specific product category and they have general market knowledge, e.g. product information, promotions, price, and quality, for different kinds of products. Moreover, they are well-informed about both newly released and established brands and products. In addition, consumers high in shopping efficacy are adept with the search and shopping processes. Unlike market experts, efficient consumers are focused on their personal abilities to minimize the time needed to purchase products. Shopping efficacy is not strongly tied to interpersonal communication about products.

To develop a measure of shopping efficacy, an item pool was generated based on a focus group study and relevant literature. These items were tested on a sample of 43 students at a major west coast university. Based on initial reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis, four Likert items were retained (1=strongly agree/5=strongly disagree; Cronbach’s alpha=.89): 1) When I go shopping, I can quickly buy the product I want; 2) I can find the product I am looking for without spending much time; 3) I can shop quickly; and 4) I have the skills to find the product I am looking for in a short amount of time.

Shopping efficacy is related to differences in how consumers perform the shopping process; we expect that those who are high in shopping efficacy would be especially attuned to the retailer-provided efficiency of the shopping process. Thus, for those high (low) in shopping efficacy, an illogical or unorganized product display or website would result in lower (no effect on, possibly higher) process satisfaction This should impact their overall satisfaction more than for those who are low in shopping efficacy. This research examines the effect of shopping efficacy on overall satisfaction, and resulting behavior intentions.

To test these effects, an online study was conducted with 169 university students (80 males and 87 females). Randomly assigned participants visited one of two online florist shopping websites designed for this study. The websites differed in efficiency to check out with one requiring three clicks and the other requiring approximately 20 clicks. Participants examined two bouquets and then went through the checkout process (without actually paying for the bouquet). After checking out, participants answered questions related to the website, manipulation checks, and the shopping efficacy scale. In order to make the online shopping experience more realistic, the day after participants completed the product choice, each received an email with a message reflecting a good or bad product from the bouquet recipient. At this time, participants completed scales to measure their overall satisfaction (Spreng, MacKenzie, & Olshavsky 1996) and behavioral intentions (adapted from Mittal, Kumar, & Tsios 1999). Regression analysis indicated a positive relationship between shopping efficacy and overall satisfaction (β=.145, t=1.896, p<.05). Behavioral intentions related to the product were measured by three questions: repurchase intentions from the same website; from the same florist; and likelihood to recommend the florist. SEM results revealed that the relationship between shopping efficacy and behavioral intentions was evident when including overall satisfaction as a mediator (χ² (1)=0.884, TLI=1.001, CFI=1.000, and RMSEA=.000). Shopping efficacy also had a direct effect on behavioral intention related to the experience (the likelihood that the participant would tell others about the experience with the florist) with β=.199, t=2.625, p<.01.

These results indicate that shopping efficacy has a direct impact on overall satisfaction and that those high in shopping efficacy are more likely to talk about the experience. The positive relationship between shopping efficacy and overall satisfaction significantly influences consumers’ intentions to repeat purchase and make recommendations. Overall, these results suggest that shopping efficacy makes a contribution to both consumer behavior literature and marketers. Indeed, it is expected that satisfaction ratings and behavioral intentions results will be more meaningful if this construct is taken into consideration.

References