

Understanding Satisfaction Formation Of Shopping Mall Entertainment Seekers: A Conceptual Model

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Abstract

Entertainment consumption is a common activity in the shopping centre environment. However, very little research (e.g. Parsons, 2003; Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003) has examined the concept of entertainment consumption in the shopping centre context. Hence, this conceptual paper presents a research model which aims to understand shopper satisfaction with entertainment consumption. The proposed model is an extension of the recent work conducted by Sit, Merrilees and Grace (2003). The model comprises five key constructs, namely hedonic motives, functional evaluation, affective evaluation, overall satisfaction, and behavioural loyalty. Relationships between these constructs are discussed, together with research propositions, which will be empirically tested in future research. Research implications of the conceptual model are presented.

Introduction

A shopping centre caters to a diversity of shopper segments including the convenience shopper and the entertainment shopper (see Sit, Merrilees and Grace, 2003). However, some shopper segments are not enthusiastic about entertainment consumption, for example the convenience shopper. Indeed, entertainment targeted at 'anti-entertainment' shopper segments is at best redundant, and at worst counterproductive. However, this proposed study focuses primarily on understanding the satisfaction formation of 'pro-entertainment' shopper segments, such as the entertainment shopper (see Sit, Merrilees and Grace, 2003).

Shopping centre entertainment can be classified into three categories, namely special event entertainment, specialty entertainment and food entertainment (Barreto and Konarski, 1996; Haynes and Talpade, 1996; Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003). The key distinction between these entertainment categories is their length of operation. For example, *special event entertainment* is offered on an occasional, temporary and discrete basis and includes events such as fashion shows and celebrity signing. Conversely, *specialty entertainment* and *food entertainment* contribute to the more permanent tenant mix of a shopping centre (Barreto and Konarski, 1996). Specialty entertainment involves movie theatres and video arcades, while food entertainment includes a range of eateries, cafés or restaurants. Shopping centre entertainment is emerging a major element of shopping centre innovation worldwide (Groover, 2005). The popularity of shopping centre entertainment is evident in Australia. For example, the recent redevelopment of Westfield Bondi Junction (Sydney) now offers an authentic food court offering a wide variety of eateries, ranging from an oyster bar to a seafood restaurant to a patisserie (Groover, 2005). While, entertainment consumption is commonly found in the shopping centre environment, very limited academic research (e.g. Parsons, 2003; Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003) has examined shopper satisfaction with this activity. To address this gap in the literature, this proposed study focuses on understanding the satisfaction formation of entertainment seekers. Such an understanding is worthwhile because it will: (1) extend our knowledge on hedonic consumption of shopping centres; and (2) serve as a valuable input to effective entertainment planning. Hence, this conceptual paper presents a research model which aims to understand the antecedents and consequences of shopper

satisfaction with entertainment consumption. The proposed model is an extension to the recent work by Sit, Merrilees, and Grace (2003).

Overview of Literature Review

Shopping Centre Image. Many studies on shopping centre image are dominated by the ‘big four’ dimensions, namely *merchandise mix*, *accessibility*, *services* and *atmospherics* (Dennis, Marsland and Cockett, 2001; Frassetto, Gil and Molla, 2001; Reynolds, Ganesh and Lockett, 2002; Wong, Lu and Yuan, 2001). The dominance of the ‘big four’ means that researchers have neglected shopping centre entertainment, which is a major component of the modern shopping centre mix (Groover, 2005). Hence, further research on entertainment consumption at shopping centres is required.

Hedonic Consumption. Entertainment consumption is a form of hedonic activity at the shopping centre, and thus its primary evaluation should be on affective experiences, such as enjoyment and excitement (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994). However, functional attributes of shopping mall entertainment, such as the variety of eateries will also have an impact on shopper satisfaction. Indeed, the interaction of shoppers with those functional attributes is inevitable because entertainment consumption occurs within the shopping mall environment (Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson, 1994; Shim and Eastlick, 1998). Hence, a ‘*hybrid*’ approach to evaluation which integrates both functional attributes and affective experiences is useful to the understanding of satisfaction formation of entertainment seekers.

Consumer Satisfaction. Previous research on consumer satisfaction has been dominated by the ‘expectation-disconfirmation’ approach (Patterson and Spreng, 1997; Spreng, MacKenzie and Olshavsky, 1996) or the ‘performance’ approach (Cronin and Taylor, 1994). The proposed model reported in this conceptual paper adopts the ‘performance’ approach, which purports that consumer satisfaction is derived from the evaluation of functional attributes *per se* rather than the disconfirmation between consumer perceptions and expectations of those attributes (Cronin and Taylor, 1994). The validity of the ‘performance’ approach is supported by previous studies (e.g. Davis and Heineke, 1998; Teas, 1993). However, a limitation of the ‘performance’ approach is that *consumer emotions (affective experiences)* are neglected in the satisfaction equation, yet affective experiences are important to satisfaction formation of entertainment seekers due to the hedonic nature of the activity (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994).

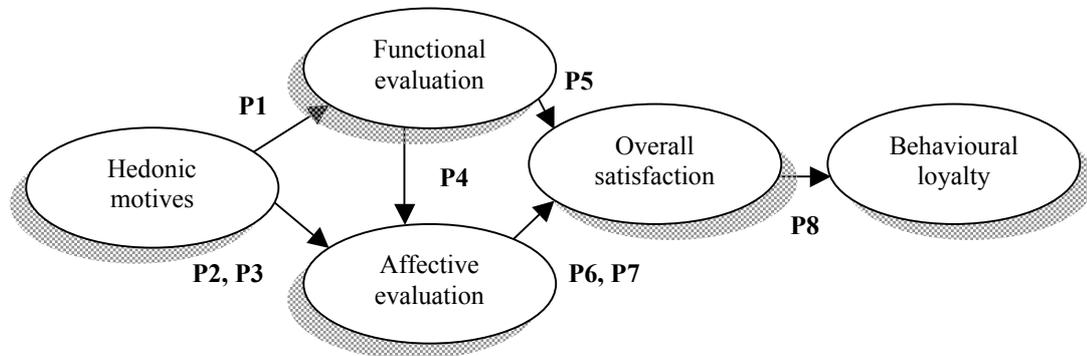
Discussion of Key Constructs

In this conceptual paper, a research model consisting of five key constructs, namely hedonic motives, functional evaluation, emotional evaluation, overall satisfaction, and behavioural loyalty is presented. The research model is depicted in Figure 1.

Hedonic Motive. Hedonic motives reflect the psychological forces which predispose a shopper to engage in entertainment consumption. These forces are *beyond* task completion or purchasing product in a deliberate and efficient manner (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994). Instead, hedonic motives are driven by the potential enjoyment, fun and adventure offered by entertainment consumption. Indeed, a review of the leisure literature reveals three dimensions of hedonic motive which may be relevant to entertainment consumption. They are ‘*affiliation*’ (e.g. I thought the family would enjoy it, the family can do something together, to watch other

people, to enjoy the crowds), ‘*escapism*’ (e.g. to have a break from my shopping, to get away from my daily duties, to have something to do), and ‘*novelty*’ (e.g. I like to try different food, I like the variety of things to see and do, it was interesting because it was something different) (Nicholas and Pearce, 2001; Wann, Schrader and Wilson, 1999).

Figure 1: A Conceptual Model of Shopper Satisfaction with Entertainment Consumption at Shopping Centres



Source: adapted from Sit, Merrilees and Grace (2003)

Functional Evaluation. Functional evaluation is concerned with the appraisal of the tangible attributes of entertainment consumption (Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003). The nature of functional attributes will differ between specialty entertainment, special event entertainment and food entertainment. For example, functional attributes which are important to food entertainment may include the variety of eateries, friendly service and convenience, while functional attributes for special event entertainment may include the ability to easily view the event (visibility and perceived crowding).. A list of generic functional attributes which may be applicable to all three entertainment categories is yet to be developed.

Affective Evaluation. Affective evaluation represents the appraisal of affective characteristics of entertainment consumption. That is, emotions or feelings induced by entertainment consumption. The emotions of *pleasure* and *arousal* identified in the environmental psychology theory are deemed to be relevant to entertainment consumption (see Donovan and Rossiter, 1982).

Overall Satisfaction. Overall satisfaction reflects the summative assessment of entertainment consumption as being satisfying or dissatisfying, and reflects the general impressions of shoppers with the activity (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Oliver, 1997).

Behavioural Loyalty. Behavioural loyalty reflects the preference and continued support of a shopper for engaging in entertainment consumption (Andreassen, 1998; Dick and Basu, 1994; Oliver, 1997). Thus behavioural loyalty generally is measured by intentions for repeat consumption, increased spending, or to recommend to others.

Relationships between Key Constructs

Eight propositions are proposed to explain the relationships between the key constructs.

Hedonic Motive and Functional Evaluation. First, Proposition 1 focuses on the association between the intensity of hedonic motive and the degree of functional evaluation. For example, Walters and Jamil (2003) found that grocery shoppers with stronger motives for 'shopping for specials' placed greater emphasis on the grocer's advertising and were more likely to talk to others about price specials. Similarly, a study by Garbarino and Johnson (2001) found that audiences with higher 'enrichment' motives placed stronger emphasis on the performance of actors and plays in their evaluation. In the same study, audiences with higher 'relaxation' motives were reported to place higher priority on physical facilities and theatre location in their evaluation. Hence,

Proposition 1: Hedonic motives will have a direct and positive impact on functional evaluation.

Hedonic Motive and Affective Evaluation. Proposition 2 is concerned with the association between the intensity of hedonic motives and the degree of affective evaluation. In a shopping centre context, McGoldrick and Pieros (1998) found that mall patrons with stronger shopping motives reported higher pleasure and arousal as compared to those with weaker shopping motives. In the context of an outdoor craft market, Dawson, Bloch and Ridgway (1990) found that visitors with stronger product or experiential motives expressed higher pleasure and arousal at the craft market, as compared to those with weaker product or experiential motives. Hence:

Proposition 2: Hedonic motives will have a direct and positive impact on affective evaluation

Given the hedonic nature of entertainment consumption, the association of hedonic motives should be stronger with affective evaluation than with functional evaluation. Indeed, entertainment consumption should primarily be driven by the subjective elements of entertainment, playfulness, fun and enjoyment (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994). Hence:

Proposition 3: Hedonic motives will have a stronger impact on affective evaluation than on functional evaluation.

Functional Evaluation and Affective Evaluation. Proposition 4 focuses on the positive association between functional and affective evaluation, which has been supported in many studies (e.g. Machleit and Mantel, 2001; Sweeney and Wyber, 2002; Wakefield and Baker, 1998). For example, Wakefield & Baker (1998) found that tenant variety and atmospherics directly and positively determined shopper excitement within the shopping centre environment. This proposition can also be supported by the *environmental psychology theory*, asserting that emotional responses of an organism are evoked by the physical attributes of an environment (see Donovan and Rossiter, 1982). Thus:

Proposition 4: Functional evaluation will have a direct and positive impact on affective evaluation.

Functional Evaluation and Overall Satisfaction. Proposition 5 focuses the direct and positive effect of functional evaluation on consumer satisfaction, which is well documented in the satisfaction literature (Koo, 2003; Minor, Wagner, Brewerton and Hausman, 2004; Szymanski and Hise, 2000). For example, a study by Minor, Wagner, Brewerton and Hausman (2004) focused on audience satisfaction with live entertainment and found that the perceived performance of entertainment attributes directly determined the audience satisfaction. Moreover, the audience with higher ‘attribute’ evaluation also expressed greater satisfaction with the live entertainment. Hence:

Proposition 5: Functional evaluation will have a direct and positive impact on overall satisfaction.

Affective Evaluation and Overall Satisfaction. Proposition 6 emphasises the direct and positive effect of affective evaluation on overall satisfaction, which is empirically supported by previous studies (e.g. Mattila and Wirtz, 2001; Wirtz, Mattila and Tan, 2000). For example a study in the context of a gift shop, found that store patrons who experienced stronger pleasure and arousal also expressed higher store satisfaction (Mattila and Wirtz, 2001).

Proposition 6: Affective evaluation will have a direct and positive impact on overall satisfaction.

Given the hedonic nature of entertainment consumption, satisfaction of entertainment-seekers should be more influenced by their affective experiences than their perceived performance of functional attributes (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994). Hence:

Proposition 7: Affective evaluation will have a stronger impact on overall satisfaction than functional evaluation.

Overall Satisfaction and Behavioural Loyalty. Proposition 8 emphasises the association between overall satisfaction and behavioural loyalty, which is extensively reported in the literature (Bloemer and Ruyter, 1998; Patterson and Spreng, 1997; Yu and Dean, 2001). For example, Bloemer and Ruyter (1998) found that shoppers with greater satisfaction were more likely to revisit the department store. Therefore:

Proposition 8: Overall satisfaction will have a direct and positive impact on behavioural loyalty.

Conclusion and Research Implications

The proposed study reported in this conceptual paper provides a starting point for understanding satisfaction formation of ‘pro-entertainment’ shopper segments in shopping centres. In particular, the conceptual model will be used to examine the antecedents and consequences of shopper satisfaction with entertainment consumption. The model comprises five key constructs, namely hedonic motives, functional evaluation, affective evaluation, overall satisfaction and behavioural loyalty. The primary focus of hedonic consumption is on affective experiences (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). However, this conceptual paper proposes that affective experiences are also likely to be influenced by functional attributes relative to entertainment consumption. This is consistent with environmental psychology theory (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982). The impact of hedonic motive on overall satisfaction

will be mediated by both functional and affective evaluation. Overall satisfaction of entertainment seekers should result in positive behavioural loyalty. Eight research propositions are presented in this paper and these will be examined using a quantitative methodology, such as a mall intercept survey across a number of regional shopping centres in Australia. Shopping centre patrons will be randomly and systematically sampled. It is proposed that structural equation modelling will be conducted to examine the fitness of the research model.

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