

Effect of Shopping Value on Service Convenience, Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

In the current market environment and with changing socio economic trends, the need for convenience has been more emphasized. Convenience is a key aspect of component of customer evaluation of the service experience. Researchers have realized the importance of integrating the convenience concept in their empirical studies. Study examines the theoretical and strategic aspects of how consumer's perception of service convenience is influenced by individual shopping value. Shopping value includes an overall assessment of subjective worth considering all evaluative criteria. It contains qualitative and quantitative, subjective and objective that brings the complete shopping experience. Consumers with utilitarian and hedonic shopping value perceive time and effort cost differently. The researchers investigate how these variables affect perception of convenience among consumers. The researchers also discuss the effect of convenience on satisfaction and loyalty. An intense review of the extant literature been done on the convenience literature in conjunction with a review of various consumer behavior concepts, laid the foundation of developing the overall model and related research propositions and suggested directions for further research. No known research has been found in the literature which shows the relationship between individual shopping value and convenience. How different convenience dimension affects customer's loyalty is also been uncharted.

Keywords: Convenience, Effort, Repurchase Spending, Repurchase Visit, Satisfaction, Shopping Values, Time

1. Introduction

In the dynamic competitive service environment, providing satisfactory value to the consumers is imperative. Organizations have traditionally increased value to consumers by either lowering the price of the product or service, increasing the quality of the product or service or decreasing non-monetary costs such as the time and effort required to acquire and consume the product or service⁶¹. Tremendous socioeconomic change, rapid technological progress, more competitive business environment and opportunity costs has increased the affluence in the society. Consumers have started demanding more convenience to save their time and efforts. It has been seen that individual consumer values time differently and as per his orientation towards

time. According to the orientation and approach towards time he decides how much cost (monetary and non-monetary) he wants to forgo during buying process. Like wise a person may shop for various reasons or motives other than his or her need for product or services⁵⁶. No known research has been found in the literature which shows the relationship between individual shopping attitude and convenience. How different convenience dimension affects customer's perceived value is also been uncharted. This study examines the theoretical and strategic aspects of how consumer's perception of service convenience is influenced by individual shopping value. The researchers investigate how shopping value affects perception of convenience among consumers. The researchers also discuss the effect of convenience on satisfaction and loyalty.

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2. Theoretical Background

2.1 The Convenience Concept

The American Heritage Dictionary (1992) has frequently defined Convenience as “the quality of being suitable to one’s comfort, purposes, or needs”, “a situation or a time convenient for someone” and as “something that increases comfort or saves work”. Convenient (adj.) has been described as “easy to reach; accessible” and “suited or favorable to one’s comfort, purpose, or need”. Morgansky (1986) defined convenience as an ability to “accomplish a task in the shortest time with the least expenditure of human energy”. Voli⁵⁷ has referred convenience as “inherent time-saving or effort saving characteristics or attributes of good or service and the disposition or orientation among consumers for products with these attributes”.

Consumer convenience orientation has been related to all products (goods & services) that save consumers time and effort (non monetary cost). Convenience orientation refers to a person’s general preference for convenient goods and services¹⁵. Convenience orientation is the value consumers place on goods and services with inherent time and effort saving characteristics²⁰.

Convenience in manufactured goods includes product size, preservability, packaging and design, which can reduce consumer’s time and effort in purchasing, storage and use. Service organizations create value for consumers through performances. Contemporary consumers demand convenience at every stage of their buying behavior process, from pre purchase to post purchase. The concept of service convenience provides a mechanism which involuntarily reduces a consumer’s perceived time and effort expended on service acquisition and consumption¹⁵. Service convenience facilitates the sale of goods as well as the sale of services. By creating additional convenience to the consumer, the non-monetary value of the service offer is increased as non-monetary cost is the central issue of the convenience concept. Companies need to understand how consumers define convenience and what different types of convenience they are looking for.

It is important to note that many studies have endorsed the significant impact of convenience on consumer buying behavior. Berry et al. proposed the first conceptual model of service convenience and suggested five types of service convenience¹⁵.

2.2 Evolution of Service Convenience Construct

The concept of convenience was initiated by Copeland²⁵ with classification of convenience goods as one of the type of consumer products. From mid 1960’s to mid 1970’s extensive research was done to understand the profile of convenience oriented customer and factors affecting convenience consumption. Anderson⁵ had defined convenience oriented consumption as: 1. satisfies some immediate want or need and 2. releases time or energy or both for alternative uses. Anderson argued about time and energy aspect of convenience which consumer has to forego while using any goods and services. Up till mid 1980’s convenience was seen as only one-dimensional construct, mostly related with time saving or time buying construct. Gradually researchers realized the potential problem with the operationalizations of convenience construct^{13,16}. Yale and Venkatesh⁵⁹ in 1986 rejuvenated the need for more research related to convenience construct and about its dimensionality issue. They proposed untested multidimensional operationalization of convenience in their model. They proposed that there are six consumer characteristics or variables which can influence the convenience orientation: temporal/economic variables; spatial variable; psychological variable; sociological variable; philosophical variable and situational variable. Further they recommended six convenience class attributes: time utility, accessibility, handiness, appropriateness, portability and avoidance of unpleasantness. They argued that the rise of service economy requires the systematic examination of convenience as “primary salient product attribute”. O’Shaughnessy⁴³ also discussed multi dimensions of convenience and proposed that consumer consider two types of criteria while choosing any product: intrinsic preference criteria and extrinsic preference criteria.

Brown^{19,20} suggested five dimensions of convenience: time, place, acquisition, use and execution supported by utility theory of economics. They mentioned that execution dimension stands for new logical contribution to the convenience construct and convenience literature

Anderson and Shagun¹ proposed ‘value-added’ convenience in goods and services. Such type of products require less consumer’s time and effort in compare to the other products giving the same final benefit to the end user. Further onwards most of the studies were focusing

on multi-dimensions of convenience in context with retail industry^{47,48}. Seiders et al.⁴⁸ suggested four type of convenience given by retailers to consumers: access, search, possession and transaction convenience. Reimer and Clulow (2000) proposed a model containing nine attributes which gives a more inclusive definition of retail centre convenience. Those attributes were composition, compatibility, concentration, access, parking, trading hours, design, enclosure and shopping services and amenities. These attributes help to reduce shopping costs: spatial (related to space), temporal (refers to time) and effort.

In 2002 Berry et al. introduced the first conceptual model of service convenience which proposed a more comprehensive multi-dimensional measure of convenience within services context. They suggested that all business are service business, services are everywhere. Therefore, service convenience refers to consumers' time and effort perceptions related to using or buying a service. Further, this model discussed about factors which influences the customer perceived convenience: Service characteristics; few firm related factors and individual consumer differences. Model further explained that perceptions of service convenience affect consumer's overall evaluation of the services. Berry et al. model has been found as the most comprehensive one till date. Their study has provided the different direction to convenience construct. From 2002 onwards all contemporary studies^{21,22,24,50} have taken berry et al.'s model as a base to examine consumer attitude towards convenience construct.

2.3 Shopping Value

Value is "responsible for the selection and maintenance of goals (or ends) toward which individuals strive, while simultaneously regulating the manner in which this striving takes place"⁵⁴. Peter and Olson⁴⁴ and Griffin et al.³¹ mention that value is consumers broad life goals and they often involve the emotional affect associated with such goals.

In the context of shopping, a stream of research has focused on the value derived by complete shopping experience. Consumers visit stores for a variety of reasons, not only for purchasing or procuring products or services that satisfy emerging wants and needs but also to seek other values of shopping such as recreation, socialization, information, self gratification, etc^{10,52}. Jones et al.³⁶ call these reasons and motives 'shopping values' and

distinguish between two types. Firstly, they identify the utilitarian values of shopping, meaning that consumers look out for and concentrate on the most generic goal of shopping, functional utility and tangible consequences, i.e. to get the right product for the right price and at a minimum effort or cost. Secondly, they identify hedonic values which represent subjective and emotional worth.

From a retail point of view, this perspective of customer values and preferences can become of crucial relevance as it contributes to answering the question of 'why people shop', closely connected to the answer of 'where people shop' or which shopping destinations are patronized by consumers^{51,58}. For instance, the choice of store location and the provision of parking facilities attract more utilitarian whereas the use of atmospheric stimuli such as music, aroma or light may appeal more to hedonists.

3. Conceptual Framework

As depicted in the theoretical framework given in Figure 1, it is proposed that shopping value has an effect on perception of convenience among consumers. Firms design different marketing strategies to lure customer at every stage of buying process. While understanding what consumer expect from their shopping trip and what are their needs towards conservation of non- monetary resources, service provider can satisfy consumer, which eventually will lead to customer loyalty. As it is widely known that consumer goes through with complete buying process while making buying decision²⁹, so it is relevant to consider the conceptualized five dimension of service convenience proposed by Berry et al. that reflects the potential for convenience at every stage of consumer buying process. These five dimensions include:

- *Decision convenience* - involves consumers' perceived time and effort expenditure to make purchase or use decisions. For e.g. whether to self perform or purchase the service, which supplier and what specific services to buy.
- *Access convenience* - involves consumer's perceived time and effort expenditure to initiate service delivery. Service provider's location, operation hours, parking availability and technology (self service) are prominent in access convenience.
- *Transaction convenience*- involves consumers' perceived expenditures of time and effort to effect a

transaction. Transaction convenience is related to the customer's right to use the service.

- *Benefit convenience*- is consumers' perceived time and effort expenditures to experience the service's core benefits.
- *Post benefit convenience*- involves the consumers' perceived time and effort expenditure during reinitiating contact with a firm after the benefit stage of the service.

3.1 Types of Shopping Value

In a general view value has been recognized in two ways 1. a utilitarian outcome resulting from some type of conscious pursuit of an intended consequences and 2. an outcome related more to spontaneous hedonic responses captures a basic duality of rewards for much human behavior. Several authors acknowledge that shopping can produce two types of value among consumers i.e utilitarian and hedonic value^{10, 12, 30, 53}.

3.2 Utilitarian Shopping Value

Utilitarian dimension of shopping has received major attention of marketing researcher¹⁰. Utilitarian value is viewed as an errand or work where shopping is functional and the shopper seek only to successfully complete shopping task¹⁰. The utilitarian value reflects shopping with work mentality, task related, rational and whether or not a product acquisition related mission is accomplished^{8,10,11,29,53}. Babin et al.¹⁰ give a typical example of this type of shopping. In their two focus group study, respondents proclaim, "I like to get in and out with a minimum amount of time wasted. I get irritated when I can't find what is needed.... and I have to go to another store to find it" and "To me, shopping is like mission and if I find what I am looking for, I am satisfied-mission accomplished".

Thus utilitarian shopping value is identified when the needed product is obtained, and it is increased when product can obtained more effortlessly (Mitch, Barry and Doan, 2000). It is also being mentioned that a purchase is not a necessary precursor of utilitarian shopping value¹⁰. Consumers collecting information out of need rather than recreation also fall under utilitarian value¹⁷.

Lee and Jeffrey³⁷ mentioned utilitarian value as an overall assessment of functional benefits includes of traditional price saving dimension, a service dimension, a time saving dimension and a merchandise selection dimension. Price saving means services offered at right price, given quality. Service dimension is related with

service quality judgment by consumers and service provided by retailers to satisfy consumers during or after shopping behavior³⁷ (Zeithmal, 1998). Merchandise selection is availability of variety of items shoppers can choose in a shopping mall or retail environment. Time saving and effort saving dimension becomes the most aspect for modern shoppers because of having time pressure in routine life. Conservation of time and effort become an important motivation for them. As by and large utilitarian value is identified when needed products is obtained and it is increased as the product is obtained more effortlessly. So it is proposed here that

P1: Consumers having utilitarian value towards shopping will have less favorable perception towards service convenience during all the stages of buying process as compare to consumers with hedonic value.

3.3 Hedonic Shopping Value

As compared to utilitarian aspect of shopping, hedonic value is more subjective and personal than and results more from fun and playfulness than task completion¹⁰. The hedonic aspects of shopping manifests shopping's potential entertainment and emotional worth and can involve increased arousal, heightened involvement, perceived freedom, fantasy fulfillment and escapism^{8, 10,17,33}. Shopping with and without purchasing can also provide hedonic value in many ways. In one of Babin et al.¹⁰ focus group study respondent reveal that "I enjoy shopping when it helps me to forget my problems".

Bellante and foster¹³ mentioned that consumer perceive time and effort cost differently spend by them while shopping for hedonic services. More time and effort can increase the value of services because time and effort are more often viewed as investment. Bellenger and Kagaonkar¹⁴ found that shoppers who look for fun or pleasure enjoy purchasing as well as other leisure activities in malls, are more willing to spend time on shopping and visit mall more often. Babin and Darden⁹ state that expenditure of time and money positively affects hedonic value. Therefore this study propose that

P2: consumers with hedonic value towards shopping will have more favorable perception towards service convenience as compare to consumers with utilitarian value.

3.4 Satisfaction

In the field of marketing, customer satisfaction has been

studied the most in relation with every construct, as satisfaction is the starting point and does affect subsequent consumer behavior. Researchers have consistently found that satisfaction gets affected by the consumer's evaluation of waiting time^{15, 48}. Studies have also reported a strong relationship between the customer's evaluation of wait and overall satisfaction^{15, 48}. Olsen and Johnson (2003) mentioned that consumer's perception of service encounters are based on monetary and non-monetary component of service. Non monetary cost is the central issue to the convenience construct. It has been found that service inconvenience play a role in switching behavior (Keaveney, 1995). Consumers' convenience perception and their effect on service evaluation are influenced by time and energy cost¹⁶. It has been proposed that the perceived service convenience has positive affect on overall satisfaction^{15, 50}.

P3: Consumers' favorable perception of service convenience will have positive influence on their satisfaction with the services.

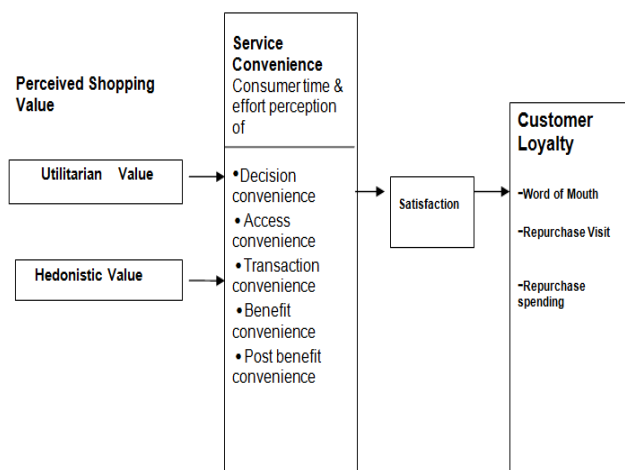


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for this study.

3.5 Indirect Effect on Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty focuses on a customer's repeat purchase behavior that is triggered by a marketer's activities. However, repeat purchase behavior may not be a true indicator of brand loyalty³⁴. Customer loyalty has both behavioral and attitudinal components²⁷. The researcher has studied customer loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior"⁴¹.

Customer loyalty can be viewed in terms of 'repurchase behaviour'^{32, 39, 40, 55}. Researchers have added an attitudinal component to repurchase behavior to arrive at customer loyalty, arguing that behavioral measures do not distinguish between spuriously loyal customers (retained by default) and truly loyal customers who shop as a positive choice^{7, 28, 38, 42, 45}. On similar lines, Bloemer and Kasper¹⁸, and Jain et al.³⁵ argue that the behavioral approach to loyalty may not yield a comprehensive insight into the underlying reasons for loyalty instead it is a consumer's disposition in terms of preferences or intentions that plays an important role in determining loyalty.

Hence, Loyalty was operationalized as a combination of:

- Positive word-of-mouth communication, (re-patronize)
- Likelihood to visit, (re-patronize)
- Intention to spend (re-patronize)

Colman²³ once stated that "Customer loyalty is all about the two c's- convenience and customer service". To achieve customer loyalty is the ultimate goal of every business to sustain in the business for long run. Quite frequently, in past studies quality, price and convenience have been seen as antecedents to customer loyalty⁶¹. Customer loyalty issue has been overlooked by researchers in respect to convenience construct. Authors of present study here propose that

P 4: Consumers who have favorable perception towards convenience will have positive influence on customer loyalty.

3.6 Word-of-Mouth Communication

Word-of-mouth communication is defined as an informal communications between a customer and others concerning evaluations of goods or services. It includes "relating pleasant, vivid, or novel experiences; recommendations to others; and even conspicuous display"⁶.

P 5: Consumers who have favorable perception towards convenience will have positive Word of Mouth for service provider.

3.7 Repurchase Visit and Spending

Seiders et al.⁴⁹ documented that convenience interacts with satisfaction to have positive influence on repurchase

visit and spending. Seiders et al.⁵⁰ found that decision convenience will have positive and direct impact on repurchase visit. Whereas access convenience when interacts with satisfaction influences repurchase visit positively. Other convenience dimensions would not have significant effect on customer's repurchase visit. . But authors of present study feel that access convenience should have direct positive affect on repurchase visit, as when consumers initiate their service purchase and obtain easy access should affect their visit.

Seiders et al.⁵⁰ also anticipated differential effects of service convenience dimensions on repurchase spending. Seiders et al.⁵⁰ found that repurchase spending is positively related to benefit convenience and other dimensions have no significant effect. Authors of present study believe that repurchase spending should also get affected by transaction and post benefit convenience when interacts with satisfaction, as both dimensions come under the buying evaluation process.

P 6: Consumers who have favorable perception towards decision and access convenience will have positive affect on repurchase visit.

P 7: Consumers, who have favorable perception towards transaction, benefit and post benefit convenience will have positive affect on repurchase spending.

4. Scope for Future Research

Our quest in this article was to conceptualize that how shopping value has an effect over perceived service convenience and future research can consider of checking validity of this model in different settings. Future research should consider expanding the service convenience domain by further exploring the service convenience construct and its antecedents and subsequent effects on customer patronage. As Berry et al.¹⁵ suggest, "Service convenience is uncharted territory and requires further investigation in order to increase our understanding of this phenomenon."

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