



# The moderating role of shopping trip type in store satisfaction formation



Auke Hunneman<sup>a,\*</sup>, Peter C. Verhoef<sup>b</sup>, Laurens M. Sloot<sup>b,c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> BI Norwegian Business School, Nydalsveien 37, 0442 Oslo, Norway

<sup>b</sup> University of Groningen, Nettelbosje 2, 9747 AE Groningen, The Netherlands

<sup>c</sup> EFMI Business School, Groeneveld 2, 3744 ML Baarn, The Netherlands

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## ABSTRACT

Consumers may weigh store attributes differently depending on the type of shopping trip. For example, fill-in shoppers likely value convenience, due to the ad-hoc nature and urgency of such trips. However, no study has yet explored the effects of shopping trip types on satisfaction formation. This study investigates how three types of shopping trips — major, regular fill-in, and special fill-in — affect satisfaction formation. Using data for all Dutch grocery chains from 2009–2014, we show that service, price, and convenience are important drivers of satisfaction. We also find that the effects of these drivers on store satisfaction depend on the shopping trip type. Major shoppers, for instance, treat service factors as less important to their satisfaction than other shoppers do. Convenience is a more important driver of satisfaction for regular fill-in shoppers. Price is a more important determinant of satisfaction on fill-in trips related to special occasions like birthdays and family dinners.

## 1. Introduction

In today's highly competitive retail environment, retailers seek to enhance store satisfaction through the development of store formats that appeal to consumers pursuing a particular shopping trip type (Bhatnagar & Ratchford, 2004; Fox, Montgomery, & Lodish, 2004). The retailer Tesco, for instance, employs four different store formats (Express, Metro, Superstores, and Extra) intended to appeal to consumers based on their respective situation and shopping goals. For example, Tesco Express, the convenience format, appeals to consumers who prefer a nearby store (a relatively stable consumer characteristic) and/or have time constraints (a more situational factor; see Park, Iyer, & Smith, 1989). Superstores, with their large and deep assortments, attract consumers who prefer one-stop shopping on regular shopping trips. Importantly, *perceptions* of retailers' marketing mixes (rather than the actual marketing mixes) significantly influence consumers' choices of store formats. Because store choice is at least partly driven by store satisfaction, retailers need to better understand the drivers of store satisfaction in order to develop store appeal and customer loyalty (e.g., Sirakaya-Turk, Ekinci, & Martin, 2015).

The existing literature shows that several variables, such as household characteristics, may moderate the relationship between store attribute perceptions and store satisfaction. Because these variables may influence the importance of one or more store attributes, they provide opportunities for market segmentation (Ter Hofstede, Wedel, & Steenkamp, 2002) and targeted marketing. The shopping trip

type is another variable that potentially moderates the effect of store attribute evaluations on store satisfaction. A rich literature on shopping behavior classifies shopping trips as either “major” or “fill-in” (Kahn & Schmittlein, 1989, 1992; Walters & Jamil, 2003). Major trips are regular trips, usually performed on a preferred day, that aim to purchase a household's more commonly used items. Fill-in trips, on the other hand, satisfy urgent needs, such as running out of a household staple like milk. Fill-in trips may also be used to make purchases for a less common situation, such as a special dinner. We divide fill-in trips into *regular* trips that satisfy “daily” needs (replenishment) and *special* trips that arise from infrequent occasions like family dinners and birthday parties. This distinction between types of fill-in trips is new to the literature, and thus a major contribution of our study.

We build our work on indirect evidence in the existing literature that the shopping trip type moderates the effects of store attributes on store satisfaction. For example, Bell and Lattin (1998) showed that large-basket shoppers prefer EDLP stores because they offer lower overall prices across multiple categories. On the contrary, small-basket shoppers shop more opportunistically and exploit price variations (e.g., from promotional offers) over time. Of course, Bell and Lattin's (1998) research focused on objective prices rather than perceptions about price. However, we expect the same effect for price image, based on previous work showing a relation between actual prices and subjective price images (Mägi & Julander, 2005; Van Heerde, Gijsbrechts, & Pauwels, 2008). In the spirit of this work, we claim that much of the variation in how consumers evaluate store attributes stems

\* Corresponding author at: BI Norwegian Business School, Norway.

E-mail addresses: [auke.hunneman@bi.no](mailto:auke.hunneman@bi.no) (A. Hunneman), [p.c.verhoef@rug.nl](mailto:p.c.verhoef@rug.nl) (P.C. Verhoef), [l.m.sloot@rug.nl](mailto:l.m.sloot@rug.nl) (L.M. Sloot).

from differences in shopping behavior. Despite the large number of store satisfaction studies, none have yet examined the moderating role of shopping trip type on store satisfaction. Specifically, this paper investigates how three shopping trip types (major, regular fill-in, and special fill-in) moderate the effect of store attribute perceptions on store satisfaction.

To accomplish this, our study used an extensive dataset, covering 2009–2014, that featured consumer evaluations of all grocery chains in the Netherlands, their specific store attribute evaluations, and the stated purpose of the shopping trips. In doing so, we contribute to the store image and shopping behavior literature in several important ways. First, we merge the two literatures by introducing the shopping trip type as a situational moderator of consumer satisfaction. Second, we advance the literature on shopping behavior by extending the typology of shopping trips with a new type: namely, fill-in trips that arise due to special occasions like family dinners and birthday parties. Finally, while previous studies have related the shopping trip undertaken to consumer demographics (e.g., Kim & Park, 1997), we do not assume such a one-to-one relationship between the two. Rather, we align with other research (e.g., Popkowski Leszczyc, Sinha, & Timmermans, 2000) in assuming that the same shopper may engage in different shopping trips depending on the occasion. For example, consumers may visit a primary grocery store for regular purchases on so-called major shopping trips (Mägi, 2003), while they may visit other stores for fill-in purchases. Indeed, Popkowski Leszczyc et al. (2000) found that consumers prefer larger stores for major shopping trips and small neighborhood stores for regular fill-in trips. On this basis, we explore whether shopping trip variables have an effect beyond consumer demographics. We included both sets of variables in our model in the hopes of producing richer insights.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: We first review the literature on store satisfaction formation and retail shopping behavior. Next, we develop our hypotheses and present the research methodology. Subsequently, we discuss the empirical results of our study. We end with a discussion of management implications and research limitations.

## 2. Literature review

This article combines two retailing literatures that have, so far, mostly been developed in isolation. First, we utilize the work on consumer shopping behavior that has considered when and how often consumers shop for (fast-moving) goods (e.g., Kahn & Schmittlein, 1989, 1992). Second, we build upon the large literature on store satisfaction formation, which investigates how consumers develop overall attitudes toward and preferences for store formats based on perceptions about relevant store attributes (e.g., Sirohi,

McLaughlin, & Wittink, 1998). This section reviews both literatures and points out how exactly our work unifies the two (See Table 1).

### 2.1. Shopping behavior

This section reviews the shopping behavior literature in line with the research objectives of the relevant studies in that literature. One research stream in this literature is mostly *descriptive* and investigates the types of shopping trips that consumers engage in based on trip frequency and spending behavior. This starts with the pioneering work of Kahn and Schmittlein (1989), who showed that consumers make two distinct types of shopping trips: major and fill-in. As noted before, major shopping trips are defined as regular trips, usually performed on a preferred day of the week rather than when there is an urgent need. Such trips aim to buy many of a household's more commonly used items, which generally require a lot of time, effort, and money (Nordfalt, 2009). Fill-in trips satisfy more urgent needs, such as when the household is out of milk or preparing for a novel situation, such as a special dinner. The main challenge of this literature is determining the type of trip based on variables such as the dollar amount spent on a trip, the time elapsed between trips, and consumer-generated measures, the latter of which offers insights into the purpose of the trip. With such measures, for example, Walters and Jamil (2003) extended Kahn and Schmittlein's (1989) typology by adding trips where consumers visit the store primarily for price specials (unfortunately, our data did not allow us to integrate this type; see the Limitations section). Likewise, our study employs self-reported measures in order to better understand how shopping tasks influence store attribute weights, which can only be assessed if we know consumers' exact purpose for visiting the store (Davis & Hodges, 2012).

In our study, we distinguish between three different shopping trips based on the known role of *situational factors* in consumer behavior (e.g., Bearden & Woodside, 1976; Wakefield & Inman, 2003). Bearden and Woodside (1976) showed that there is a major difference in attitude toward a brand depending on whether the brand is consumed in a social context or alone (the situational factor). Following this reasoning, Wakefield and Inman (2003) found that price sensitivity depends on the consumption occasion. For example, if consumers seek to derive pleasure and/or fun from the consumption of a product (a family dinner), consumers are less likely to be price sensitive. The same is true when the consumption takes place in a social setting compared to a non-social setting. These results even hold for products that primarily provide functional benefits, like groceries. Based on this, we distinguish between fill-in trips that have functional motives (replenishing stock) and those that have hedonic motives and/or lead to social consumption (e.g., birthday parties, family dinners). In doing so, we extend the shopping behavior literature by adding a new shopping trip type.

**Table 1**  
Overview of relevant literature.

Dependent variable	Key references	Moderator variable
Panel A: Shopping trip – performance literature		
Use of coupons	Kahn & Schmittlein, 1989 Walters & Jamil, 2003	
Amount of purchases in product category	Kahn & Schmittlein, 1989	
Amount of unplanned purchases	Kollat & Willett, 1967 Nordfalt, 2009	
Shopping basket profitability	Walters & Jamil, 2003	
Number of purchases of promoted products	Walters & Jamil, 2003	
Store format choice	Bell & Lattin, 1998; Nilsson et al., 2015; Popkowski Leszczyc et al., 2000	
Panel B: Satisfaction formation literature		
Product and service satisfaction	Mittal et al., 1999	Consumption goals
Product satisfaction	Slotegraaf & Inman, 2004	Attribute resolvability
Store satisfaction	Ter Hofstede et al., 2002	Spatial proximity
Store satisfaction	Hunneman et al., 2015	Consumer confidence
Store Satisfaction	This Study	Shopping Trip

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