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SERVICE ATTRIBUTES SATISFACTION AND ACTUAL REPURCHASE BEHAVIOR: THE MEDIATING INFLUENCE OF OVERALL SATISFACTION AND PURCHASE INTENTION

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ABSTRACT

The study proposes that the effect of service attributes satisfaction on actual repurchase behavior is mediated by overall satisfaction and purchase intention. Data collected through a survey questionnaire were used to test the proposed model. Findings support the mediation hypothesis and show that service attributes satisfaction has a positive and significant impact on overall satisfaction; overall satisfaction has a positive and significant impact on purchase intention; and purchase intention has a positive and significant impact on actual repurchase.

INTRODUCTION

A significant amount of research has been conducted to understand the antecedents and consequences of consumer satisfaction. Although the number of studies on the topic is impressive, Szymanski and Henard (2001) found in their meta-analysis that surprisingly very few outcomes of satisfaction have been investigated. The outcomes that have received significant scholarly attention include purchase intention, loyalty, word of mouth advertising, and complaining behavior. Some of the major findings from the body of research on satisfaction show that:

- Satisfaction has a positive influence on loyalty (Oliver 1997, Gustafson, Johnson, and Ross 2005), word-of-mouth communication (Brown et al. 2005), and patronage intentions (Babin and Griffin 1998).

- Severe dissatisfaction encourages negative word of mouth advertising (Szymanski and Henard 2001) and prompts complaining behavior when attribution is easy and the probability of redress is higher (Folkes 1984; Richins 1983; Ursic 1985).
- Satisfaction is positively related to purchase intentions (LaBarbera and Mazursky 1983; Yi 1990) and satisfied customers show less price sensitivity (Stock 2005) and are also willing to pay a higher price premium (Homburg, Koschate and Hoyer 2005).

One substantive outcome of consumer satisfaction that remains under-researched is *actual* repurchase behavior. Although the link between consumer satisfaction and actual repurchase behavior constitutes an integral part of the nomological network (Perkins 1993; Szymanski and Henard 2001), Mittal and Kamakura (2001) found that virtually all the published studies, with the exception of Bolton's (1998), used repurchase intention rather than actual repurchase behavior as the criterion variable. They concluded that the existing studies have used intention data because they are easier to collect through survey research or through other instruments, and they attributed the lack of empirical studies on actual repurchase behavior to data collection and data availability problems.

In Mittal and Kamakura's study (2001), demographic characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, and education moderated actual repurchase behavior. Their

findings showed that the functional form relating satisfaction to repurchase intention was different from the functional form relating satisfaction to repurchase behavior. They also found that in some groups satisfaction led to a higher repurchase rate, and in others satisfaction and repurchase behavior were completely uncorrelated. While their study found support for the moderating effects of customer characteristics on repurchase behavior, the study of the process through which satisfaction influences actual repurchase behavior will provide additional insights into the outcomes of satisfaction.

In a more recent study, Solvang (2007) examined the effect of service quality on repurchase behavior in a retail environment. The study found that service quality affected satisfaction, and satisfaction affected repurchase behavior indirectly through affective loyalty. The study also found that satisfaction had no significant direct effect on repurchase behavior. Considering the theoretical and strategic significance of the link between satisfaction and repurchase behavior and the obtained non-significant result in the study, it would be theoretically beneficial to reexamine the relation between satisfaction and actual repurchase behavior to better understand the process. Tse, Nicosia, and Wilton (1990) and others have also highlighted the importance of understanding the process that leads from satisfaction to repeat purchase behavior.

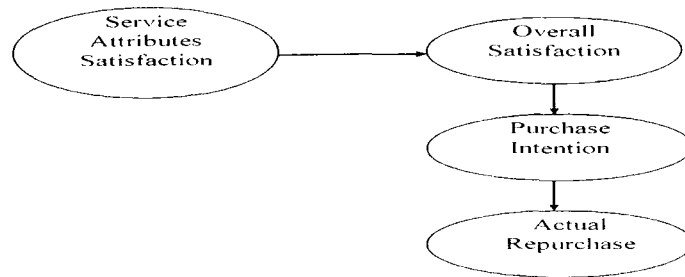
CONCEPTUAL MODEL

This paper addresses the above mentioned concerns by proposing a model that integrates the theories of reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980) and planned

behavior (Ajzen 1991) in social psychology with the satisfaction and intention literature in consumer psychology (see Szymanski and Henard 2001) to explain *actual* repurchase behavior. The satisfaction literature in marketing treats satisfaction as an antecedent of intention, and the intention literature in social psychology posits intention to be a reliable predictor of behavior. The model proposed and tested in this article adds to the literature in three meaningful ways: (1) by combining the satisfaction-intention link and the intention-action link into a satisfaction-to-intention-to-action sequence to explain repurchase behavior, (2) by examining the influence of attributes-based satisfaction on overall satisfaction, and (3) by proposing that the effect of service attributes satisfaction on actual repurchase behavior is mediated by overall satisfaction and purchase intention (see Figure 1).

Research on satisfaction has a long history in marketing. The construct is viewed as central to marketing because of its posited effects on outcomes that marketers value, such as consumer loyalty, word-of-mouth advertising, purchase intention, and repurchase behavior. Marketing offerings are developed to satisfy needs and wants of consumers, and, therefore, how consumers rate attributes of a product or service and how satisfaction influences behavior are issues of significant importance to marketers. Although the construct holds a coveted position in marketing, defining satisfaction has been a challenging endeavor because it can be viewed from different levels of abstraction (single event versus collective impression or level of satisfaction received) and from different perspectives (individual, firm, or society) (Taylor 2008).

Figure 1
Service Attributes Satisfaction and Actual Repurchase



In their review of the literature, Giese and Cote (2002) discussed the different perspectives in defining satisfaction, especially with respect to it being a process or an outcome (state) and whether the response is affective, cognitive, or conative. They noted that the debate helped define the domain of the construct as comprising of three essential elements. Satisfaction relates to an object (e.g., product or service), covers a time component (e.g., post purchase or post consumption), and involves a response (e.g., cognitive and/or affective). Combining the three elements, they delineated satisfaction as a summary affective response of varying intensity with a time-specific point of determination and directed toward focal aspects of product or consumption. The treatment of satisfaction as an affective summary response to a post-purchase or post-usage experience is supported in the literature.

Although satisfaction has been defined variously, the conceptualization that has received wide support is that it is a post-choice or post consumption evaluative judgment concerning a specific purchase selection (Day 1984). Tse and Wilton (1988) specify it as the consumer's response to the perceived performance, and Fornell (1992) describes satisfaction as an overall post-purchase evaluation. Oliver (1981) shows how purchase and post-purchase experience

influence satisfaction. The view that overall satisfaction is a global evaluation resulting from a service experience forms the basis of our paper, in line with Olsen, Wilcox, and Olsson's (2005) and Oliver's (1999) conceptualization of satisfaction as a post usage evaluation of state or feelings toward a product or service.

Conceptualizing overall satisfaction as a post usage state brings into focus the consumer-service interface. When using a service, consumers rate the different attributes of the service, which then leads to a judgment of the level of overall satisfaction with the experience of using the service. The attributes based model places the evaluation of different attributes of a product or service as an antecedent of overall satisfaction (LaTour and Peat 1979; Oliver 1993). Singh (1991) suggests that there is sufficient and compelling evidence to hypothesize that consumer satisfaction can be understood as a collection of multiple satisfactions with various objects that constitute the service system. Satisfaction with service attributes thus results from the observations of attribute performance and strongly influences the rating of overall satisfaction (Oliver 1993). This conceptual representation, as Oliver (1993) notes, coincides with commercial surveys and other satisfaction surveys that ask consumers to rate their satisfaction with the

different attributes of a product or service. The focus on product or service attributes also provides higher specificity and diagnostic usefulness by making us ask specific questions about the antecedents of satisfaction (Mittal, Kumar, and Tsiros 1999).

The marketing literature also consistently identifies consumer satisfaction as a key antecedent to repurchase intention. In the satisfaction-intention link, satisfaction is shown to have a consistent and positive effect on purchase intentions (Cronin and Taylor 1992). LaBarbera and Mazursky (1983) found that satisfaction level provides a significant explanation of intention formation. The Howard and Sheth model (Howard 1974) explicitly recognizes that satisfaction experience influences future purchase intention. Empirical evidence also supports the posited link. In a survey of customers of a performing arts center, satisfaction and repurchase intention were found to be significantly correlated (Rust & Williams '94).

The influence of intention on subsequent behavior has also been studied in the literature. In the intention-action link, purchase intention has behavioral consequences, and a favorable intention is more likely to result in a repurchase than an unfavorable intention. Although intention is hypothesized to influence actual repurchase behavior, the link has not been adequately explored in the literature. Grounded in the theory of reasoned action and dissonance theory, the link shows that intentions have behavioral consequences, and that the execution of intended behavior reduces dissonance. In the case of consumer behavior, consumers who have expressed an intention to repurchase will be more likely to repurchase (Perugini and Bagozzi 2001).

HYPOTHESES

Service Attributes Satisfaction and Overall Consumer Satisfaction

The assimilation-contrast theory (Anderson 1973) provides the theoretical

underpinnings for investigating consumer satisfaction. The theory deals with the outcome of the discrepancy between what one expects and what one experiences. If the discrepancy between what one expects and what one experiences is too large to be assimilated, contrast effect occurs. This effect has been incorporated in the expectation-disconfirmation theory (Oliver 1977, 1981), which treats satisfaction as a result of the discrepancy between expectations of product performance and perceptions (experience) of product performance. Drawing on the expectation-disconfirmation paradigm, marketing scholars view consumer satisfaction as an evaluative judgment that is based on personal experience with an object (Soderlund and Ohman 2003). Consumers express their level of satisfaction with a product or service after they have purchased and used the product or service. Their overall satisfaction indicates a global assessment and is affected by the level of satisfaction with different attributes of the product or service.

Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann (1994) note that overall satisfaction is "based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good or service" (p. 54). Unlike transaction-specific consumer satisfaction, which is based on the immediate evaluation of a transactional experience, overall satisfaction is determined by the "general level of satisfaction based on all experiences with the firm" (Garbarino and Johnson 1999, p. 71) and, as such, is most appropriately assessed after consumption has occurred (Ostrom and Iacobucci 1995). As an evaluative judgment (Cronin and Taylor 1994), overall satisfaction reflects consumers' satisfaction with various attributes of the firm and the product (Czepiel, Rosenberg, and Akerele 1974). Thus, overall satisfaction with a symphony will be a function of the evaluation of different attributes of a symphony such as musicians, conductor, musical selections, symphony hall acoustics, program book, and customer service. How consumers evaluate these different service

attributes will determine the level of overall satisfaction. Therefore, the following research hypothesis is tendered:

H1: The higher the level of satisfaction with the different service attributes, the higher the level of overall satisfaction.

Overall Consumer Satisfaction and Purchase Intention

Overall satisfaction has been shown to influence behavioral intentions. LaBarbera and Mazursky (1983), for example, claim that purchase intentions are directly influenced by customer satisfaction. If overall satisfaction is high, consumers will be predisposed to express favorable repurchase intentions. Thus, for services that consumers can use repeatedly, such as attending a symphony, an increase in overall satisfaction will favorably influence purchase intentions. The positive link between overall satisfaction and purchase intention finds support in consumer behavior literature. Cronin and Taylor (1992) and Yi (1990), for example, found that satisfaction influences purchase intentions positively. Therefore, the following research hypothesis is put forward:

H2: The higher the level of overall satisfaction, the more favorable the purchase intention.

Purchase Intention and Actual Repurchase Behavior

The link between purchase intention and actual repurchase behavior is grounded in the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Ajzen 1991). Both theories assert that actual behavior is a function of behavioral intention. Consumers who express positive purchase intentions will be more likely to

repurchase than those who express negative purchase intentions. The expression of an intention to engage in a specific behavior, such as buying a symphony ticket, mentally prepares consumers to perform the act. They would experience dissonance if they do not meet their commitment. The notion of self-concept also suggests that people's beliefs about themselves influence their behavior (Baumeister 1998). Thus, consumers are more likely to follow through with a repurchase to achieve congruency between intention and action. Therefore, the following research hypothesis is tendered:

H3: The more favorable the purchase intention, the more likely the actual repurchase behavior.

Method

LISREL 8.8 was used to empirically test for the hypothesized relations between exogenous and endogenous constructs and the mediating effects (Joreskog and Sorbom 1996). The LISREL procedure used a correlations matrix and an asymptotic covariance matrix to test the proposed conceptual model in which one of the variables was dichotomous. One of the indicators of the exogenous construct and the indicator of each endogenous construct were set to 1. This ensures that the scales on which the concepts and indicators are measured have equally sized units (Hayduk 1988).

Questionnaire. A committee consisting of business consultants, marketing academics, and the symphony's marketing director and staff was involved in constructing a survey questionnaire. The committee met regularly to discuss the purpose and content of the questionnaire. The questionnaire went through several iterations before the final version was developed.

Sample. The final survey questionnaire was mailed in two waves to 5,349 customers of a

major symphony orchestra in the Midwest. A total of 3,087 responses was received. A list-wise deletion procedure, which selects only observations with complete data on all the variables, generated a sample of 2,509 observations, representing a response rate of 46.9%.

Exogenous Construct. While the number of service dimensions varies from study to study, there is agreement in the literature that service attributes relate to outcomes (core service), interactions (service delivery process), and physical environment (facilities or equipment) (Rust and Oliver 1994; Brady and Cronin 2001; Bitner 1990; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1985; Westbrook 1981). Based on existing research, consumer comments, internal symphony data, and management experience, the committee selected the following six attributes: musicians, conductor, musical selections, sound quality, program books, and customer service. These six attributes of a symphony experience cover the core service provider (musicians and the conductor), service offering (musical selections), service location (sound quality in the symphony hall), service information (program book), and service facilitation (customer service). Similar indicators have been used in existing research in the context of theatrical experience (Garbarino and Johnson 2001). Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with each indicator on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 9, with 1 indicating very dissatisfied and 9 very satisfied. The reliability for service attributes satisfaction was 0.81, which is above the recommended level of 0.70 (Hair, et. al., 2006).

Endogenous Constructs. The three endogenous constructs were overall satisfaction, purchase intention, and actual repurchase. Overall satisfaction is a global measure of satisfaction, which summarizes satisfaction with the experience of the service received. It answers the question, how satisfied the consumer is with the service

experienced. Overall satisfaction was thus measured by a single indicator which asked respondents how satisfied they were with the *experience* of attending the symphony orchestra on a 9-point Likert scale, anchored by very dissatisfied and very satisfied. Rust and Williams (1994), in the context of a performing arts center, also used a single indicator as a direct measure of overall satisfaction.

Purchase intention is a measure of the likelihood of making a purchase in the future. Peter and Olson (2008) suggest that purchase intention should be measured specific to action, target, and time components of behavior. Purchase intention was measured by a single indicator which asked respondents to indicate how likely they were to purchase (action) tickets to the Symphony (target) for the next season (time). The response was obtained on a 5-point Likert scale, anchored by definitely would not and definitely would. Rust and Williams (1994) used a single indicator measure, asking respondents not how likely they were to repurchase a ticket, but what was the percentage chance of purchasing a season ticket next year.

Actual repurchase is a behavioral outcome. It addresses the question of whether or not the respondents actually repurchased the next season ticket to the symphony. Therefore, the 'yes' or 'no' outcome is a single indicator measure, noted as '0' if they did not repurchase and '1' if they did. After the completed questionnaires were received, the symphony noted whether or not the respondents repurchased the ticket.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The Proposed Model Fit and Parameter Estimates

The proposed mediation model tested the paths from service attributes satisfaction to overall satisfaction, from overall satisfaction to purchase intention, and from purchase intention to actual repurchase (See Figure 1). For this model, the χ^2 value of

150.68 with 27 degrees of freedom was significant with $p=0.00$. However, as χ^2 is influenced by sample size, where for large samples even trivial discrepancies are significant, it is recommended that other fit indices be examined to judge the fit of the model (Klem 2000). These other fit indices, such as the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) with values of 0.99 and 0.99, respectively, showed a very good fit. However, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) with a value of 0.88 and the Normed Fit Index with a value of 0.86 showed a modest fit. These four indices thus vary from a very good fit to a modest fit for the proposed mediation model (Bentler and Bonett 1980). Furthermore, other fit indices, such as Root Mean Square Error of

Approximation (RMSEA) and Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) with values of 0.043 and 0.11, respectively, also showed mixed results for the mediation model (see Table 1). Overall, the fit of the model can be considered acceptable. In terms of the path coefficients, the effect of service attributes satisfaction on overall satisfaction was positive and significant ($\Gamma=1.15$); the effect of overall satisfaction on purchase intention was positive and significant ($\beta=0.09$), and the effect of purchase intention on actual repurchase behavior was positive and significant ($\beta=0.60$). All parameters were in the hypothesized direction (see Table 1).

Table 1

**Proposed Mediation Model
Structural Equation Coefficients**

Predicted Sign	From	To	Parameters Estimate	t-value
(+)	SASAT (ξ_1)	→ OSAT (η_1)	1.15	29.88
(+)	OSAT (η_1)	→ PINT (η_2)	0.09	5.41
(+)	PINT (η_2)	→ AREP (η_3)	0.60	20.88

Goodness-of-Fit Statistics

Chi-Square	150.68 ($p=0.00$), 27 degrees of freedom
Goodness-of-Fit Index	0.99
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index	0.99
Comparative Fit Index	0.88
Normed Fit Index	0.86
Root Mean Square Residual	0.11
RMSEA	0.043

Mediation Tests

Mediators in theoretical models account for the effects of independent variables on criterion variables, explaining why or how such effects occur (Baron and

Kenny 1986). In the sequence of effects, the “independent variable causes the mediator which then causes the outcome” (Shadish and Sweeney 1991, p. 883). Baron and Kenny (1986) specify the following three conditions for variables to function as mediators, (1)

variations in the levels of independent variable should account for variations in mediators, (2) variations in the levels of mediators should account for variations in the criterion variable, and (3) when the paths from independent variable to the mediators and from the mediators to the criterion variable are controlled, a previously significant relation between the independent variable and the criterion variable should no longer be significant. This means that when the full model is estimated, the direct path from service attributes satisfaction to repurchase behavior should not be significant.

Mediation Test and Parameter Estimates

As recommended, two tests were conducted to meet the requirements of the mediation effect. In the first test, only one parameter is estimated, the direct effect of service attributes satisfaction on actual repurchase behavior. This effect should be significant (Baron and Kenny 1986). Empirical results show that the direct effect of service attributes satisfactions on actual repurchase ($\Gamma=0.20$) was positive and significant, as required for the mediation effect (see Table 2, Test 1).

Table 2

Test 1: Mediation Test (Significant Direct Effect)

Predicted Sign	From	To	Parameters Estimate	t-value
(+)	SASAT (ξ_1)	→ AREP (η_3)	0.20	6.74

Goodness-of-Fit Statistics

Chi-Square	214.04 (p=0.00), 14 degrees of freedom
Goodness-of-Fit Index	0.98
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index	0.95
Comparative Fit Index	0.99
Normed Fit Index	0.98
Root Mean Square Residual	0.035
RMSEA	0.052

Test 2: Mediation Test (Full Model, Insignificant Direct Effect)

Predicted Sign	From	To	Parameters Estimate	t-value
(+)	SASAT (ξ_1)	→ OSAT (η_1)	1.15	29.77
(n.s.)	SASAT (ξ_1)	→ AREP (η_3)	0.02	0.81
(+)	OSAT (η_1)	→ PINT (η_2)	0.09	5.38
(+)	PINT (η_2)	→ AREP (η_3)	0.59	20.84

Goodness-of-Fit Statistics

Chi-Square	150.02 (p=0.00), 26 degrees of freedom
Goodness-of-Fit Index	0.99
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index	0.99
Comparative Fit Index	0.88
Normed Fit Index	0.86
Root Mean Square Residual	0.11
RMSEA	0.044

Legends:

Service Attributes Satisfaction (SASAT)

Overall Satisfaction (OSAT)

Purchase Intention (PINT)

Actual Repurchase (AREP)

Not Significant (n.s.)

In the second test, the three paths of the proposed model (shown in Figure 1) and a direct path from service attributes satisfaction to actual repurchase were estimated. The critical requirement of this test is that the direct path from service attributes satisfaction to actual repurchase should become insignificant to support the mediation hypothesis (Baron and Kenny 1986; Hoyle and Smith 1994). Results of this test were as follows. The effects of service attributes satisfaction on overall satisfaction ($\Gamma=1.15$), of overall satisfaction on purchase intention ($\beta=0.09$), and of purchase intention on actual repurchase ($\beta=0.59$) were all significant and positive, as required by the mediation criterion. And the direct effect path from service attributes satisfaction to actual repurchase ($\Gamma=0.02$) was close to zero and

non-significant (see Table 2, Test 2), satisfying the requirement of the mediation effect. This change of a previously significant path (Test 1) into a non-significant path (Test 2) validates the mediation hypothesis proposed in this study (Baron and Kenny 1986; Holmbeck 1997). Another test related to the χ^2 difference was also conducted to test for mediation effect. In this test, a non-significant difference between the proposed mediation model (Table 1) and the full model (the Table 2 Test 2) would show the validity of the mediation hypothesis. The χ^2 difference between the two models was 0.66 with 1 degree of freedom. This difference is not significant at the 0.05 level, which provides additional support for the proposed mediation hypothesis.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the effects of attributes-based satisfaction on repurchase behavior through the mediating effects of overall satisfaction and purchase intention. The research provides a deeper understanding of the antecedents of overall satisfaction, which in the literature has been conceptualized as a cumulative evaluative response or as a global feeling or state (Oliver 1993; Gottlieb et al. 1994). The significant results support the hypotheses presented in the study and also confirm previous findings in the literature, providing valuable support to the significance of service attributes in influencing overall satisfaction. Service encounter is a multiattribute experience, and in the case of a symphony, it shows how satisfaction with the provider, offering, location, information, and facilitation together forms the basis for the feeling of overall satisfaction. Service attributes satisfaction identifies what the consumers are satisfied with and how they rate the different attributes of the service in terms of satisfaction. Overall satisfaction reflects an evaluation of the level of satisfaction with the overall service experience, a global evaluation of the customer-service interface.

The proposed model also addresses the philosophy of science debate about prediction versus explanation. If the interest is merely in predicting the probability of repurchase behavior, the model that would suffice is the direct path model that shows the effect of service attributes satisfaction on actual repurchase behavior. The positive and significant link shows that one can use service attributes satisfaction to predict the outcome of the repurchase behavior. The appeal of this direct path lies in its simplicity and predictive power. While this link is parsimonious, it suffers from a lack of satisfactory explanatory power. To be able to explain how service attributes satisfaction leads to repurchase behavior, the mediating effect of overall satisfaction and intention will need to be incorporated. Thus, the mediation model

provides a richer explanation of both *how* and *why*.

Findings from this study have several strategic implications. Service providers need to seriously consider the impact of the different attributes of the service they provide, as it is the satisfaction ratings of these attributes that influence overall satisfaction, which then leads to repurchase behavior via intention. As service attributes satisfaction leads to repurchase behavior, it would benefit firms to deploy their scarce resources toward configuring and fine tuning these attributes to manage and enhance customer satisfaction. Mittal and Kamakura (2001) suggest that managing consumer satisfaction has emerged as a strategic imperative for most firms. From a strategic perspective, if the cost of acquiring new customers is generally higher than retaining existing customers, it would be competitively advantageous for firms to retain the existing pool of customers by focusing on the management of consumer satisfaction (Reichheld 1996; Spreng, Harrell and Mackoy 1995). For managers, this would mean increasing consumer satisfaction with different attributes that together form the value proposition. As service attributes satisfaction is enhanced, it sets into motion a process that encourages repeat purchase.

Several potential research areas emerge from this study. First, as satisfied customers tend to repurchase from the same service provider, it would thus be difficult for competitors to attract these customers to their offerings. If a firm regularly and consistently generates high levels of satisfaction among its customers, what strategic options are available to its competitors to attract these satisfied customers? This is an important research question for marketing scholars to address. Second, although this study did not address the question of how consumers weigh service attributes, research has shown that different customer groups weigh service attributes differently in determining overall satisfaction (Garbarino and Johnson 2001). Future research can explore this phenomenon by studying the value that consumers assign

to different service attributes and by examining how the evaluation of each attribute impacts the feeling of overall satisfaction.

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