12-2002

# A Qualitative Investigation of Polish Consumers' Retail Experiences during the Transitional Period: 1989-2001

Heesun Seo
*University of Tennessee - Knoxville*

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Heesun Seo entitled "A Qualitative Investigation of Polish Consumers' Retail Experiences during the Transitional Period: 1989-2001." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Human Ecology.

Ann E. Fairhurst, David W. Schumann, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Nancy B. Fair, Allison P. Young, Mary Sue Younger

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Accepted for the Council:

Anne Mayhew
Vice Provost and
Dean of Graduate Studies

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# A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF POLISH CONSUMERS' RETAIL EXPERIENCES DURING THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD: 1989-2001

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Heesun Seo
December 2002

# DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents,
Young-Ju Seo and Oak-Nam Ryu,
and my brother and sister, Ho-Sung and Hee-Jung.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people to whom I am grateful for the time I have spent at the University of Tennessee. The faculty and fellow graduate students have made this one of most rewarding and challenging experiences of my life. I am particularly grateful to my Dissertation Committee, Ann Fairhurst, David Schumann, Nancy Fair, Alison Young, and Mary Sue Younger, for their invaluable input into this research. Moreover, this research would not have been possible were it not for immeasurable support from a numerous number of colleagues and friends from all over the world.

I especially want to express my gratitude to my committee chairs, Ann Fairhurst and David Schumann, who encourage me to pursue a topic that interested me and then diligently guided me through the development and fulfillment of this meaningful undertaking. I also want to thank Adam Figiel and Grazyna Smigelska at the Krakow University of Economics for the contributions they made during the data collection phase of this research.

I also want to express my appreciation to my cohort, Marguerite Moore and Kyung-Nan Kwon, for making these four years so gratifying. Not only did they provide support and encouragement, but they also helped me to keep things in perspective. Most importantly they became true friends that I know that I will have forever.

Finally, I want to thank my parents, Oak-Nam Ryu and Young-Ju Seo, for their constant encouragement and for instilling in me the belief that nothing is impossible. They always say, "Aim high and don't ever give up your dreams no matter what they are." Thus, the subtitle of this research is "Dream Dissertation".

## ABSTRACT

The general objective of this dissertation is to investigate the most current phenomenon in the Polish retail environment and the recent Polish consumers' retail experience. Specifically, by examining information search behavior, shopping behavior, and post-purchase behavior, themes emerged in terms of how the changes in the retail environment influenced the patronage and consumption behavior of Polish consumers. An exploratory research approach is used to conduct this research due to the lack of existing knowledge on Polish consumers and the ever-changing nature of the market environment in Poland. Moreover, qualitative research method with naturalistic inquiry was used to present the Polish consumers' point of view on their retail experiences.

The data are analyzed in two simultaneous stages: 1) an open coding analysis, and 2) a thematic analysis. The findings indicate that Polish consumers shopping behavior as well as consumption behavior have been influenced by the dramatic changes in the retail environment, retail experiences in the past, and the time perception. The data appear to provide empirical evidence that the changes in time perception appear to have an impact on Polish consumers' consumption behavior. The findings also present that Polish consumers may have adapted the retail environment under free market economy but their attitudes and behaviors remain to be heavily influenced by their retail experiences under the planned economy.

This research presents a contribution to the body of knowledge by taking a significant step and addressing several untapped issues. This research provides a theoretical foundation for better understanding of Polish consumers' attitudes and behaviors, which is beyond the descriptive information presented by the previous studies.

For practitioners, this research highlights the need for better understanding of consumers in countries undergoing political and economic transition in order to achieve the promising performance by formulating and implementing the sufficient retail strategies. Replication of the study on consumers in the other parts of Poland would further strengthen the conclusions. Future research should also explore the alternative research methods due to the nature of the unknown group of consumers. Following research topics are also suggested for the further investigation: 1) effectiveness of retailer's advertising/ promotion campaigns in Polish market; 2) Polish consumer's in-store shopping behavior; 3) search behavior; 4) influence of time perception on purchase behavior; and 5) conceptualization of Polish consumer satisfaction response to retail experience.

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# PROBLEM DEFINITION

## Introduction

A decade ago the Iron Curtain, which symbolically separated the East from the West in Europe, was removed. This was an earthshaking, historical event to the people of the Central/Eastern European (CEE) countries, who had been isolated from the rest of the world for several decades. They had to face the chilling reality of high inflation, unemployment, extreme devaluation of currency, and a chaotic environment due to the rapid changes in their lives. At the time nobody could predict how the transition process would be carried out.

Since 1989 dramatic changes have occurred in CEE both economically and politically. During the last decade, international organizations (e.g., European Union, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) have carefully monitored and measured the performance of these countries. Interestingly and understandably, a high variance in the degree of transformation was found to exist among the CEE countries. While some CEE countries (e.g., Hungary, Czech Republics, & Poland) have been responding, a number of CEE countries have shown very little change (e.g., Romania). This variation is probably due to the previous level of economic development, the degree of governmental commitment toward change, and the approach used to the reform policy (e.g., gradualism, "shock therapy") (Money & Colton, 2000).

According to Money and Colton's (2000) analysis on the degree of transition among the CEE countries, differences in consumer behaviors are due to the varying degrees of transition to a market economy. For example, the economic system in

Romania had a strong central authority and strict totalitarian economic rule. Poland was seen as one of the more “mature” transition economies because of its success in economic reforms. In their view, consumers in countries where the transition is further developed have seen a larger flux of products with greater attribute diversity (Money & Colton, 2000).

While previous studies on marketing systems and consumer behavior have been conducted under an assumption of homogeneous characteristics among the CEE countries, country or even target market specific studies are needed for a more accurate understanding of consumers and the market environment of interests (Money & Colton, 2000). Some evidence reported suggests that neither the consumers in CEE countries nor their retailing systems are as homogeneous as previously assumed (Mueller & Broderick, 1995). For example, Poland shows the greatest differences from the norms of the other societies in transformation (e.g., Hungary, Czech Republic. Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia, East Germany) (Millar, 1994). In Poland, the concept of a market economy seems to have been embraced (politically, communally, and personally) more fully than elsewhere.

Of the many questions that arise about Poland and other transitional economies (e.g., CEE region, former Soviet Union states, & China), one of the most important issues involves how consumers behave as their markets change. While these countries provide a tremendous opportunity for marketers to explore the new markets and possibly to expand their market share, the transitional circumstances in the CEE region certainly provides a list of endless unanswered questions to academics: how consumers will deal with the new market order; that is, a free market system; and would the theories that have been developed and used in the Western world be applicable in the context of transitional societies. As Schultz, Belk, and Ger (1994) say

*"In the wake of the sudden transformation of the formerly communist nations of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, there currently exists an unprecedented natural laboratory in which to examine the effects of a market economy on cultural, consumer, and corporate well-being." (Shultz et al., 1994. p. ix)*

One may argue that consumers in the CEE region may behave in a similar manner since they spent several decades under the same political and economic system. However, in order to gain a meaningful understanding about consumer behavior in transitional societies, this study focused on exploring consumer behaviors in one transitional society, Poland. As it has been pointed out earlier, it is necessary to study consumers in each society or even a target segment within the society. The aim of this study, however, is to investigate consumers' behavior by focusing on consumers' recent retail experiences.

## Poland as a New Potential Market

The privatization of small and medium state-owned companies and a liberal law on establishing new firms made it possible for Poland to achieve the rapid development within a private sector which is now responsible for 70% of is economic activity (Farkas, Pappas, & Wodzicki, 2000). Initially, Poland was less favorably considered for foreign investment due to the unstable market environment that resulted from radical economic reform known as "*Shock Therapy*". However, as the 1990s progressed and the economy stabilized, the market became increasingly attractive to foreign investors. Consequently, the Polish market has emerged as the one of the most important markets in the CEE.

Although the Polish market does not have the highest level of GDP per capita in CEE, the size of the market (38 million) and the age structure of the population provide incoming investors with an attractive demographic profile. Thirty one percent of the population is under the age of 20, while only 11% fall into the over 65 age group (GUS: Polish Central Statistical Office, 1998). In addition, Poland is committed to an open-border strategy, attempting to introduce trade agreements with its neighbors (e.g., Germany). Most importantly, Poland is trying to gain early entry into the European Union (EU) and its economic policies are targeted to achieve this end. Unlike any other countries in the CEE, a number of major urban markets exist in Poland. There are ten cities with a population of more than a quarter of a million people (GUS: Polish Central Statistical Office, 1998). Only 4% of the population lives in the largest urban center of Warsaw, the capital of Poland. Table 1-1 presents the population of the top ten major metropolitan areas. Figure 1-1 shows the map of Poland with the major cities including Krakow.

## Polish Economy in Transition

Prior to 1989, Poland had experienced a persistent shortage of goods. A centrally planned economy, accompanied by price controls and limited hard currency convertibility, resulted in a market where goods were affordable but in short supply. As a result, even goods of inferior quality could find a market. In 1989, dramatic economic reforms, including the elimination of price controls, reductions in state subsidies, and free convertibility of the Polish zloty, were implemented to stimulate the market economy (Balcerowicz, 2000). The country began moving rapidly toward a market economy, and a large market for foreign goods opened up.

The economic reforms introduced on January 1, 1990 encouraged privatization, competition, and capitalism (Lipton & Sachs, 1990). Shortly after the transformation to a market economy began, Polish consumers perceived the standard of living to be worse than it was before 1989, and they anticipated that it would worsen over the next two years (Styczek, 1992). The transition was characterized by high inflation, lack of financial resources, frustration, and a striving black market. During the first seven months of 1992, for instance, prices of consumer goods and services increased 41 percent. A common complaint among Poles was: "Before, there was nothing to buy. Now you can buy anything, but nobody has the money to do so." (Styczek, 1992).

**Table 1-1. Population in Metropolitan Areas**

| Rank | City | Population (in thousands) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Warsaw | 1,625 |
| 2 | Lodz | 812 |
| 3 | Krakow | 741 |
| 4 | Wroclaw | 639 |
| 5 | Poznan | 580 |
| 6 | Gdansk | 461 |
| 7 | Szczecin | 419 |
| 8 | Bydgoszcz | 386 |
| 9 | Lublin | 356 |
| 10 | Katowice | 349 |
| | **Total** | **6,368** |

Source: GUS (Polish Central Statistical Office, 1998)


**Figure 1-1. Map of Poland**

Poland, however, benefited from the difficult but effective introduction of truly market-driven mechanisms, known as “shock therapy”, into the economy and became the first country in the region to rebound from transformational recession and exceed GDP levels seen before the reforms took place in 1989. A moderate recovery during 1992-94 was followed by robust growth (the fastest in the CEE) during 1995-99, which was driven by a rapid expansion of a new private sector. Poland’s GDP was 20 percent greater in 1999 than it was in 1989 (Balcerowicz, 2000).

With inflation and interest rates coming down and the job market improving, household expenditures were rising along with the standard of living (OECD Observer, 2000). The number of personal bank accounts, which was historically very low, increased tremendously since 1995. Consumer financing increased, and many more people were purchasing consumer durables on credit. Private consumption is projected to grow as Polish consumers enjoy strong increases in real disposable incomes in an environment of plentiful consumer goods and emerging new services.

## Polish Retail Sector in Transition

After 1989, the introduction of market rules in Poland led to spontaneous privatization and the emergence of free enterprise. Initially there was some confusion in the retail industry, exemplified by street traders and bazaars. “Wild” bazaars established without the approval of local authorities mushroomed. On the streets of major Polish cities, thousands of camp beds were unfolded, their owners using them to display any thing that was available (Jelonkiewicz, 1999a). But the street trader phenomenon soon declined. During this period, international retailers played a leading role in introducing modern retailing ideas and practices in Poland (Waters, 1999) by opening up retail outlets (e.g., hypermarkets, supermarkets, and fast food restaurants) that were entirely foreign to Polish consumers.

## Privatization in Retail Sector

Reforms of the retail sector were introduced by the government. They began to sell the state-run chains to private owners, encouraging small shopkeepers to setup their own businesses, and they welcomed foreign companies to start operating in Poland (De Souza, Lundell, & Lamb, 1993). There was a proliferation of private retail outlets after 1989.

By 1990 about 223,000 of 237,000 shops were privately owned. In 1995, the total reached approximately 426,000, of which, 419,000 were privately owned. In 1996, total sales in Polish retailing was about $1.3 billion, and more than 80 percent of that turnover was generated by private companies.

## Retail Structure and Environment

The retail sector is still dominated by the traditional single-product stores, which have 67% of the market share (Farkas et al., 2000). Bazaars, which emerged very quickly at the start of reforms, are now slowly declining with less than 11 percent of the market. After a slow start in 1991, it took modern formats only two years to increase their sales share from 6 percent in 1997 to 20 percent in 1999. Since 1992, new modern formats have been developing rapidly – hypermarkets and high service specialty chains have reached 11 percent and 9 percent of the market share, respectively.

When foreign chains began to enter Poland, Polish retailers had to respond to the new situation. Polish retailers were worried about this influx of foreign rivals. The fears of the Polish retailers were voiced by some political parties, who encouraged consumers to buy Polish goods and who promised to defend Polish retailers threatened by foreign chains (Anonymous, 2000). At present, Polish, not French, cheese, milk, meat and bread account for 80-90 percent of all food offered by foreign chain stores such as Auchan, Tesco, and Carrefour (Anonymous, 2000). Poland's small retail trade has developed in the field of information and product range, but the structure of retail trade remains dispersed and fragmented: more than 90 percent of the stores do not exceed 532.8 Sq. Ft. (50 sq. m) in size.

**<u>Polish Retail Formats</u>**

*Bazaars.* The majority of Polish bazaars were established in the late 1980s to early 1990s (Jelonkiewicz, 1999a). Sales revenue peaked between 1994 and 1996. In 1999, there were 129,000 permanent outlets open at bazaars, presenting 30% of the total number of shops in Poland. Overall sales can be categorized into: clothing (59%), footwear (8%), household appliances (5%), food products (5%), and other 23%. The bazaars grew rapidly at the outset of market reforms and vary in size. For example, the Stadion X-lecia in Warsaw has 300,000 $m^2$ and 4,000 stands. Most bazaars are located close to the Western and Eastern borders of Poland and are engaged in the wholesaling of clothing to foreigners. Bazaars started to decline as they began to face tough price-based competition from hypermarkets.

*Open-air Markets.* Open-air market serves only retail purposes and sells everything from food and cheap clothing to new computers (Jelonkiewicz, 1999b). Markets consist of various small structures ranging from tables to tiny metal huts. They are typically located next to the main streets and within residential areas. Figure 1-2 shows the entrance to one of the open-air markets in Krakow.

*Mom-and-Pop Stores*. The retail sector is dominated by the small “mom-and-pop” stores, most of which have opened since the early 1990s. Although, in general, these shops are product-specific, many sell a wide range of goods. For example, a toy store may also sell stationary and housewares.

*Single-product stores*. Single-product stores are scattered throughout the cities. They specialize in single products, ranging from second hand clothing to expensive

**Figure 1-2. Open-air Market in Krakow**

jewelry. They are typically small with selling areas of around 861 sq. ft. ($80m^2$). Unlike specialty chains, these stores are operated as single units and they have typically less attractive interiors and depth of product choice.

*Kiosk/Street vending*. This type of retail operation is usually located on broad pavement spots with high customer traffic. Rush, a Polish company, conducts both retail and wholesale trading in Poland, and runs about 16,500 kiosks throughout the country and is the largest press distributor in Poland (Jelonkiewicz, 1999a). Figure 1-3 shows one of the kiosks owned by Rush which is located around the central train station in Krakow. Kiosks shown on Figure 1-4 and 1-5 are owned by the individual seller and tend to have a less appealing exterior.

## Foreign-owned Retail Formats

Foreign retailers were attracted to Poland because of the lack of sophistication among domestic retailers, low operation costs, potential for rapid expansion, and high profits. The first retailers to arrive were Quick-Serve restaurants (Ratajczyk, 1996). These were fashionable, and provided a quality of service that locals found almost unimaginable.

*Supermarkets/Hypermarkets.* Foreign supermarket and hypermarket chains have changed the image of the Polish retail trade. Before 1993, there were no supermarkets in Poland, but they now have over 20 per cent of the food market and are continuing to grow. These formats sell both food and non-food, with non-food accounting for around 30 percent of sales. These are large outlets, 107,640 sq.ft. (10,000 $m^2$) to 322,920 sq. ft. (30,000 $m^2$) and 80 of them have already been built on the outskirts of all

**Figure 1-3. Kiosk Retail Format (Rush) and Street Vending Format around the Central Train Station in Krakow**


**Figure 1-4. Kiosk Retail Format around the Central Train Station in Krakow**


**Figure 1-5. Kiosk Retail Format (Bakery) around the Central Train Station in Krakow**

of the major Polish towns. In Poland, there are already seven foreign hypermarket operators (such as Carrefour, Allkauf and Tesco). Figure 1-6 shows the picture of a TESCO store in Krakow, opened in 2000.

Foreign-owned networks of supermarkets and hypermarkets are rapidly expanding in Poland (Di Lodovico, Flasbarth, Klocke, Lewis, Palmande, & Thomas, 2000). The hypermarket is a self-service store more than 26,910 sq. ft., selling groceries and other consumer goods. The supermarket is a self-service store of 3,229 sq. ft. to 26,910 sq. ft., selling groceries and other consumer goods. These foreign retailers have also begun to reshape the habits of consumers, who have learned to do more shopping at one time and have developed a preference for weekend shopping. The growing numbers of such outlets, usually located on the outskirts of towns and cities, are attracting customers who are busy on weekdays. These customers have started making one larger weekly or even monthly shopping trip as opposed to shopping daily.


**Figure 1-6. Hypermarket: TESCO store in Krakow**

The most successful retailing format in Poland is the supermarket and hypermarket. Tables 1-2 and 1-3 present a list of companies for each supermarket and hypermarket category and the number of outlets in Poland. For example, Spolem Zatoka has 67 supermarket outlets while U.K. grocery retailer TESCO has 36 stores called Savia. At the end of 1999, there were 67 hypermarkets in Poland, with a total trading area of 6,243,120 sq. ft. (Jelonkiewicz, 1999a). This represents about a 10 percent increase in number of stores compared to 1998. The top three players are Tesco (35 outlets), Carrefour (30), and Auchan (30) followed by Real (25), E. Leclerc (20), Jumbo (20), Geant 915), Hit (15), Minimal (15), and Allkauf (6).

According to an industry estimate, hypermarkets and supermarkets combined constitute only 1.5 percent of all shops in Poland, but they had a turnover of 15 percent of the retail trade in 1999 (Farkas et al., 2000). In early 1999, the share of large foreign chains in grocery sales in Poland increased to almost 20 percent even though the arrival of these chains began only a few years before. According to GUS (Polish Central Statistics Office) (1996) in 1995, the volume of retail sales increased by 30 percent from the previous year, to $57 billion, and in 1997 to $79 billion, an increase of 38 percent.

The main group of supermarket and hypermarket customers consists of people living in large cities, with good earnings (above 2,000 zloty monthly), either young or middle-aged who do not want to waste time and are looking for more different ways of running a household and who want to rest on weekends. However, elderly people, who have less disposable income but have more free time, are beginning to be attracted by relatively low prices and promotional offers provided.

**Table 1-2. List of Supermarkets in Poland**

| Supermarket Name | Company | Number of Outlets (1998) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Billa | Rewe | 11 |
| Globi | GIB | 19 |
| Intermarche | Intermarche | 7 |
| Major Julius Meinl | Julius Meinl | 8 |
| Max | Ahold | 7 |
| Robert | Auchan | 11 |
| Savia | Tesco | 36 |
| Spolem Zatoka | Ost Commerz Holding | 67 |

Source: Warsaw Voice (Jelonkiewicz, 1999b)

**Table 1-3. List of Hypermarkets in Poland**

| Hypermarket Name | Company | Number of Outlets (2000) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Allkauf | Ahold & Allkauf | 6 |
| Auchan | Auchan | 30 |
| Carrefour | Carrefour | 30 |
| Geant | Casino | 15 |
| Hit | Dohle | 15 |
| Jumbo | Jeronimo Martins | 20 |
| E. Leclerc | E. Leclerc | 20 |
| Minimal | Rewe | 15 |
| Real | Metro | 25 |
| Tesco | Tesco | 35 |

Source: Warsaw Voice (Jelonkiewicz, 1999b)

The success of large chains in Poland has been driven by competitive prices and a wider range of products than traditional stores (Di Lodovico et al., 2000). Hypermarkets also attract consumers with promotional offers through advertising leaflets supplied to the homes of city residents. For many families, a Saturday shopping trip to a hypermarket has become a way to spend free time. They have the computerized operation systems in stores and their warehouses and use well-thought-out promotional and pricing policies. In addition, suburban shopping centers anchored around hypermarkets are attracting more and more customers, whereas customer traffic in most city centers is declining.

*Wholesalers.* Macro Cash and Carry (Metro) is the unquestionable market leader in wholesaling. As of 1999, Metro had 18 distribution centers and reported a 13 percent increase over the preceding year (Farkas et al., 2000).

*Discount Stores.* The rapidly developing discount store is a threat to Mom and Pop stores. The discount store category is experiencing rapid growth. These types of stores combine competitive purchasing strengths with proximity to consumers who have been used to shopping in their neighborhood stores. The most enterprising discount store chains taking over the role of traditional neighborhood stores belong to foreign companies such as Jeronimo Martinsm Tengelmann, Dansk Supermarket, Metro, Tesco, and Ahold & Alkauf (Jelonkiewicz, 1999a).

*Specialty Chain Stores.* In the late 1990s, consumer durable supercenters are starting to expand in Poland (Di Lodovico et al., 2000). They include specialty chains and do-it-yourself stores of IKEA, Office Depot, Castaroma, OBI and Praktiker. Domestic competitors include the Komfort chain, which focuses on floor and wall finishing goods, specialty fashion shops (e.g., Carli Gry), and licensed sport shops (e.g., Intersport). Brand names such as Nike and Adidas often strengthen the selling power of these specialty chains. The perfume specialist, Sephora, has 16 outlets throughout Poland. In most product categories, there are specialized large-scale discounters such as Adler, Reno, Castorama and IKEA. The only domestic player in this segment is Euro, which sells household appliances and consumer electronics.

The first foreign specialty chains arrived in 1991. Most of the specialty chains (e.g., Levi-Strauss, Big Star, Yves Rocher, and Adidas) are considered to have high service levels and appeal to the upper market segment, but chains targeting the middle and lower markets, such as Rossman, Cottenfield, Carli Gry and Hala, are developing. The shops are usually small with selling areas of around 1,184 sq. ft. (110 $m^2$) and they are located in city centers or suburban shopping centers, which are most often anchored around hypermarkets.

*Department Stores.* Until recently, department stores have not played any significant role in Polish retailing. For the last couple of years, however, department stores have been renovated and redesigned to attract more consumers. The department stores can be only found in the center of big cities. The only two department store chains operating in Poland are D. T. Centrum (with a main focus on clothing, 32 outlets) and EMPiK (with a main focus on print media, 37 outlets) (Jelonkiewicz, 1999b).

## Other Retail Formats

*Internet Shopping.* During 1999, Internet sales were introduced on a wide scale in Poland. Around 15 percent of the Polish population has access to the Internet, but only 5 percent use the Internet every week. Total Internet sales have reportedly amounted to

$23.3 million for 2000, primarily on books and CDs (Jelonkiewicz, 2000). Recently, Galeria Centrum, a department store with a focus on cutting edge fashion merchandise, launched its website, www.GaleriaCentrum.com, as well as the country's first internet magazine for women, jaKobieta.pl, packed with information on everything from relationships to beauty and cooking (Anonymous, 2000). Two major challenges in operating e-commerce in Poland are the lack of computer and Internet penetration, and a reticence to use credit cards online.

*Direct Marketing.* Direct marketing is slowly progressing in the retail market. Polish society does not have much trust in this distribution channel. In Poland, direct sales account for 1 percent of retail sales and the most successful products include cosmetics (e.g., Avon), cleaning products (e.g., AmWay), labor-saving devices, and home appliances (Anonymous, 2000). The slow growth of the direct marketing sector can be explained by the inconvenient, if cash-based, deliveries and the low penetration of credit card usage.

## Polish Consumers in Transition

Poland's consumer culture is undergoing a difficult transition from state socialism to a free enterprise system. During the1980s, Poles had money to spend but little to buy because the communist regime produced too few consumer goods, closed off imports, and subsidized prices (Witkowski, 1993). Consumers dealt with this by waiting in line, watching other people's shopping bags for information on product ability, and "cruising" shops in the hope that scarce goods would possibly arrive unexpectedly (King, 1989). In 1990, after the government eliminated subsidies, dropped trade restrictions, and made the zloty a convertible currency, goods began to flow into the country and stores became well-stocked (Tully, 1990). The only remaining queues were those to receive shopping baskets and to pay cashiers for purchases.

The economic reforms brought the biggest changes in the areas of food, housing, health and education. During this transition period (1988-1994) a dramatic increase in the ownership of household durables from washing machines to computers was observed. In the process of transformation, every tenth household became the owner of a flat. According to a study by the Warsaw School of Economics (1996) on the changes in consumption patterns, there were new trends in the Polish households' consumption behavior. There was a large drop in the expenditure on food, clothing and footwear, while the expenditures on housing, durable goods, health, education, and transport increased. In addition, the increase of expenditure on durable goods resulted from a mass influx of imported durable goods into Poland and the opportunities to go abroad to buy these goods. In other words, the desire to imitate consumer behavior of households in the most affluent countries manifested itself in the purchase of durable goods.

Product decision making in Poland has become particularly important to consumers, as they have perceived that there are real choices to be made in the market place. There are more and different types of places to shop, from open-air markets and major department stores, to hypermarkets (See Figures 1-7 and 1-8) for Polish consumers.

There are also several brand choices within an expanding number of product categories, such as toothpaste, laundry detergent, and other household products. Because consumers are facing increasingly complex decisions, some have begun using heuristics to simplify decision-making (Millar, 1994). Besides increased complexity, consumers face greater risk in decision-making. They have had to make financially prudent choices in an environment of high inflation, and where the increase in prices may be highly variable from one industry's product to another.

Images of Western or American consumption patterns and lifestyle became powerfully influential factors to Polish consumers. These global images are primarily obtained from exposure to tourists, travel to neighboring countries, advertising, and the mass media. Some Polish consumers want stores that they had earlier learned about from catalogues or trips abroad. In contrast, local conditions continue to exert strong and unique influences in Polish society despite the increasing influence of global images.

Supermarkets, new cars, and a flood of 4 million mobile phones have truly changed the Polish consumers' lifestyle and shopping behavior. Poles like shopping in supermarkets, which before 1990 were not available in Poland. Shopping in supermarkets has become fashionable. For a certain proportion of customers, family shopping became a leisure activity and some families spend much of their free time in supermarkets shopping (Jelonkiewicz, 2000). They are not in a rush, saving time is not important to them. For many older people, doing shopping in these modern retail outlets is reported to be a way of releasing the frustration that was built up during humiliating communist shopping experiences, standing in long lines in front of drab, gray, neglected stores. As well, such shopping trips are economical – one can buy cheaper goods all in one place, and save valuable time (Jelonkiewicz, 1999b). The following excerpt depicts the Polish consumers attitude toward Western style outlets:


**Figure 1-7. Polish Consumers at the Neighborhood Grocery Store in Krakow**


**Figure 1-8. Polish Consumers at the Modern Specialty Store (Bakery) in Krakow**

*"… all of Lublin*[1] *lay in wait for the opening of the new Leclerc*[2] *hypermarket, … Finally, on March 25, the automatic doors of the store slid open wide, and everyone was ready to empty their wallets of cash, lines formed to enter the store, first for baskets, then for goods on the shelves, and again in front of the checkout counter…..The hypermarket – a triumph of capitalist consumerism – reduced Lublin to a few snake-like queues, which haven't been seen since the most austere days of communism." ("Lublin Loves Leclerc", Jelonkiewicz, 1999c)*

## Qualitative Consumer Research

Qualitative research is crucial in cross-cultural consumer research because the researcher is often not familiar with the foreign market to be examined. In the initial stage of cross-cultural research, qualitative research can provide insights into the differences. In turn, this enables a researcher to generate relevant questions, hypotheses, models, and characteristics, and ultimately the research design. It also helps to reduce the psychological distance between the researcher and the respondent/context.

### Cross-Cultural Consumer Research

Although the field of cross-cultural consumer behavior is relatively new, it has great potential for developing interesting new insights in many domains of consumer behavior. Cultural research can help to validate our theoretical paradigms, enrich our current theorizing, and may even lead to new theories. The most common objective for cross-cultural research on consumer behavior appears to be generalization. Several studies have attempted to generalize existing theoretical frameworks to different cultural settings. In addition to generalizations, theoretical frameworks also need to capture

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[1] Lublin is located in the south-eastern region of Poland and the 9$^{th}$ largest city in Poland with a population of approximately 360,000.

[2] Leclerc is a hypermarket chain store and owned by French company E. Leclerc

unique cultural insights from other cultures. Some studies have attempted to investigate culture-specific behavior patterns (Klein, Ettenson, & Morris, 1998). These sorts of studies offer unique insights into cultural variations and add considerably to our understanding of the distinctiveness of cultures.

Maheswaran and Shavitt (2000) suggest that future cross-cultural research should move beyond a narrow geographical focus, from the U.S., Western Europe, and Far East, to other culturally rich and diverse areas such as Eastern Europe, the Near East, Africa, and Latin America. The emic approach favors within-culture investigation, arguing that theorizing is culture-specific and should be inductive. This orientation requires that a structure be identified during the analysis of the culture. In contrast, the etic approach advocates generalization and focuses on issues that are universal and common to all cultures. In this orientation, a theoretical structure is predetermined and its validation is examined in multiple cultural contexts (Berry, 1989). The current research prototype is an etic experiment that uses instruments developed in the United States to collect data in another culture. The questionnaires are translated to address the language barrier. Some studies use statistical techniques to establish construct and scalar equivalence. Although such an approach is helpful, considering other approaches, such as emic or a combination of emic and etic, may considerably increase the validity of the findings in cross-cultural consumer research.

**Naturalistic Inquiry**

The aim of naturalistic inquiry is to develop an idiographic body of knowledge in the form of “working hypotheses” that describe the individual case. Lincoln and Guba

(1985, p. 39-43) proposed the implications of the naturalistic paradigm for actual research operation, by detailing fourteen characteristics of operational naturalistic inquiry. These include: 1) natural setting; 2) human instrument; 3) utilization of tacit (intuitive, felt) knowledge; 4) qualitative methods; 5) purposive or theoretical sampling; 6) inductive data analysis; 7) grounded theory; 8) emergent design; 9) negotiated outcomes; 10) case study reporting mode; 11) idiographic interpretation; 12) tentative application; 13) focus-determined boundaries; and 14) special criteria for trustworthiness. These characteristics are briefly described in the following section.

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) state it is essential to carry out research in the natural setting or context of the entity for which the study is proposed because realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their context. The primary data-gathering instrument is the researcher himself or herself because it would be virtually impossible to prepare, a priori, a nonhuman instrument for the variety of realities that will be encountered. In addition to knowledge expressed in language form, the tacit (intuitive, felt) knowledge is encouraged to be utilized because the nuance of multiple realities can be appreciated only in this way. Qualitative methods are more often used than quantitative methods because they are more adaptable to dealing with multiple realities and expose more directly the nature of transaction between investigator and respondent.

Purposive or theoretical sampling is preferred for research using naturalistic inquiry because the researcher may be able to increase the scope or range of information exposed as well as likelihood that the full array of multiple realities can be uncovered. Inductive data analysis is more likely to be used because this process is more effective to identify the multiple realities to be found in the data. Naturalistic researchers (naturalists) prefer to have the guiding substantive theory emerge from (be grounded in) the data because no *a priori* theory could possibly encompass the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered. The research design is expected to emerge while conducting the study because it is inconceivable that enough could be known ahead of time about the many multiple realities to devise the design adequately.

Meanings and interpretations are more likely negotiated with the participants or informants because it is their constructions of reality that the researcher seeks to reconstruct. The case study reporting mode (over the scientific or technical report) is preferred because it is more adapted to a description of the multiple realities encountered at any given site. Idiographical interpretation is most often used because different interpretations are likely to be meaningful for different realities. Making broad application of findings are not encouraged because the findings are to some extent dependent upon the particular interaction between investigator and respondents. Boundaries are set on the basis of the emergent focus because that permits multiple realities to define the focus and it cannot be set without intimate contextual knowledge. New criteria and operational procedures for trustworthiness are likely applied because the conventional trustworthiness criteria (internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity) are inconsistent with the axioms and procedures of naturalistic inquiry.

## Research Questions and Objectives

Due to recent macro changes throughout the CEE, prior research efforts on marketing and consumption in this region (e.g., Lofman 1994, 1992; King 1986; Walters 1975) – while interesting and enlightening for their time – are quickly becoming outdated. Additionally, the transformation of these economies has provided virtually unlimited ideas and opportunities for conducting research.

Of particular interest in this research is how the new market environment appears to be influencing the behaviors of individual consumers. The overall research question is as follows:

> *How do changes in the market environment, in particular the retail sector, affect the behaviors of Polish consumers, specifically in information search behavior, shopping behavior, and post-purchase (e.g., satisfaction, complaint) behavior?*

Several studies on the retail sector and on consumers' behavior in the ECC have been reported since the political and economical transition that began in the early 1990s. However, these studies tended to be observational or anecdotal. In fact, this type of research is still necessary due to the almost nonexistent prior knowledge of Eastern European retailing and consumers. The research findings, however, tend to become quickly outdated because of the speed of changes occurring in transition economies. Thus, it is extremely challenging to produce knowledge that may be useful in adding value to theory building efforts.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the most current phenomena in the Polish retail environment and the recent Polish consumers' retail experience. In designing the study, it was essential to explore and examine the qualitative data collection methods and analysis procedures that are recommended in the cross-cultural consumer behavior literature as well as literature in qualitative consumer research. An exploratory research approach was used to conduct this research due to the lack of existing knowledge on

Polish consumers, the environment, and the ever-changing nature of the market environment in Poland.

Thus, three general research questions were developed as follow:

- What changes have occurred in the Polish retail environment since the economic and political transition?
- How have the changes in the retail environment influenced Polish consumers in their patronage and consumption behavior?
- How does the Polish consumers' retail experience gained under the state planned economy influence patronage and consumption behavior under the new free market retail environment?

This study took an emic approach, because the aim of this study was not to generalize on existing theory but rather to capture unique cultural insights. Examining the Polish consumers' patronage and consumption behavior a decade after the transition process began, this study provides a unique opportunity to understand some of the underlying aspects of Polish consumers' behavior, and arguable challenges previously accepted assumptions about Polish consumer behavior. For instance, Belk and Zhou (1986) raised an issue concerning the legitimacy of using the marketing concept in the CEE countries. The marketing concept assumes that consumers know what they want and they can and will communicate these desires. However, consumers due to their experience in EEC, may be unable or unwilling to communicate this information even when they know what they want.

Using this exploratory and naturalistic mode of inquiry, the following objectives of the study were proposed:

- To investigate the Polish consumers' patronage and shopping behavior in a *particular retail context*, that is, in shopping for groceries.
- To understand the *meaning* of the situation and actions of the Polish consumers.
- To identify *unanticipated phenomena and influences* and generate knowledge to further develop new measures and theories.

## Research Opportunities and Potential Contributions

It is rather a common practice to look for research gaps in the existing literature on any give research topic. In the context of CEE, however, it seems to make more sense to phrase "gaps" in the literature as "opportunities" since very little work has been done on this topic or in this area. Thus, the research opportunities in this field of study appear to be almost infinite. In addition, the importance of work on the topics related to the CEE cannot be emphasized enough considering the unknown potential of the market environment.

## Overview of Dissertation

This chapter has presented the research topic that the dissertation will address. Specific research questions have been offered to guide this study. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive and integrative review of the appropriate literature that depicts the previous studies on consumers and the retail environment in Poland as well as the literature on the retail experience as a global concept to guide the study. Chapter 3 delineates the research methodologies used to investigate the research questions. Chapter 4 details the analysis and findings. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings and the implications for future research.

# CHAPTER 2
# CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT

## Introduction

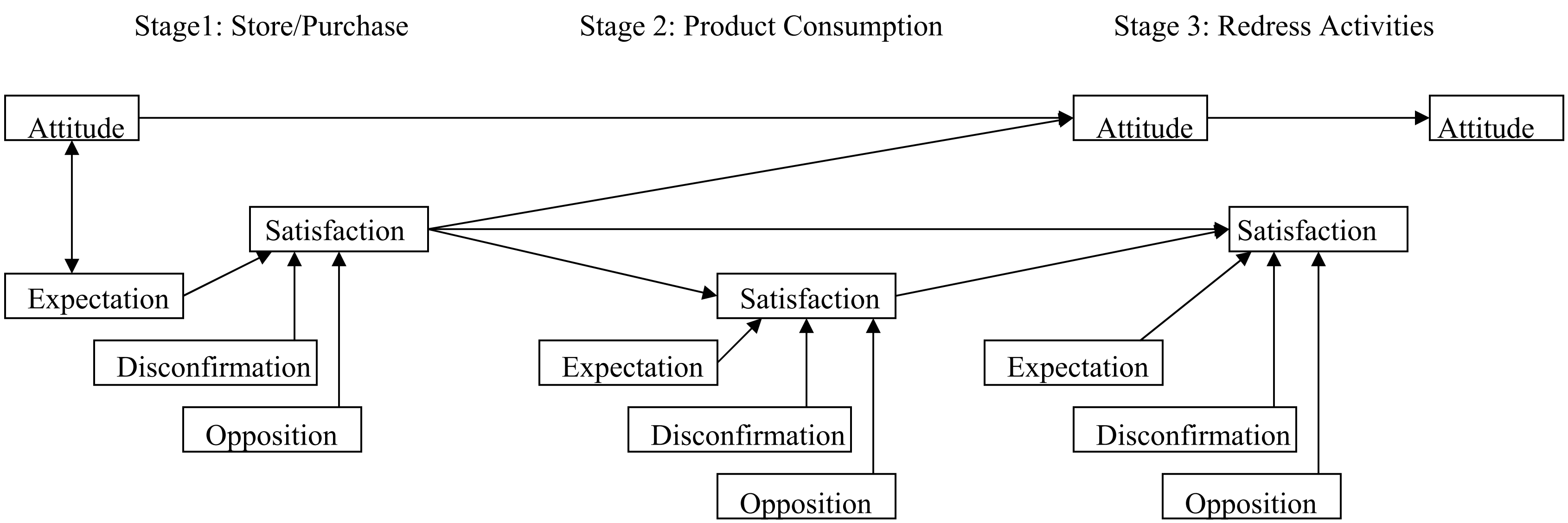
Chapter 2 reviews selected literature related to the research questions. This chapter provides the foundation and boundary for the specific questions that guided the dissertation research. The chapter consists of two major sections. The first section presents the conceptualization of retail experience, which is adopted from Oliver's (1981) Model of Retail Satisfaction Management. The second section reviews the literature on topics that make up the proposed retail experience including information search behavior, patronage behavior, retail attributes, and post-purchase behavior from the fields of retailing, marketing, consumer behavior, and psychology.

## Conceptualization of Retail Experience

Although the concept of retail experience is not well developed, pieces of the definition of retail experience can be found across the retail literature. Many researchers have noted that the retail experience is very different from the product or service experience (Czepiel, Rosenberg, & Akerele, 1975; Maddox, 1977; Renoux, 1973; Westbrook, 1981). The consumer's set of experiences with a retailer is diverse and typically includes repeated contacts over time. These contacts often span a wide range of consumer activities, and may include browsing, shopping, searching for information, bargaining, purchasing, complaining, and bill paying (Westbrook, 1981).

Oliver (1981) proposed a model of retail satisfaction management which shows how the basic satisfaction process is repeated for store satisfaction, product satisfaction, and complaining behavior satisfaction (Figure 2-1). In this model, shoppers are thought to respond to in-store purchase experiences and post-purchase customer-service experiences in essentially the same way they respond to product-consumption events. The model further suggests that the product-consumption evaluation stage may be influenced the shopper's satisfaction with the store and that product satisfaction, also explained by the expectancy-disconfirmation-opposition scheme, affects satisfaction with redress. This conceptual framework also suggests that an emotion is a function of the shopper's initial expectation level and the force of disconfirmation which moves the shopper's feeling away from that level. Oliver's (1981) model uses a process approach that assumes that each stage, store/purchase, product consumption, and redress activities, is mutually exclusive to each other in evaluating satisfaction in a retail setting.

In this study, retail experience is defined as the individual's total experience while searching for information on products and/or stores (information search), patronizing a store (patronage behavior), evaluating satisfaction (retail satisfaction), and voicing positively or negatively (complaint behavior), if necessary. The definition aims to achieve the global perspective of the retail experience that overcomes the uni-dimensional approaches of previous works, such as product, store, or service specific. Four areas were selected to guide the study: 1) information search; 2) patronage behavior; 3) retail attributes; and 4) post-purchase behavior. Figure 2-2 presents a framework of retail experience that was developed and used in this study and is explained in the following section.




Source: Oliver (1981), Measurement and Evaluation of Satisfaction Process in Retail Settings.

**Figure 2-1. Model of Retail Satisfaction Management**

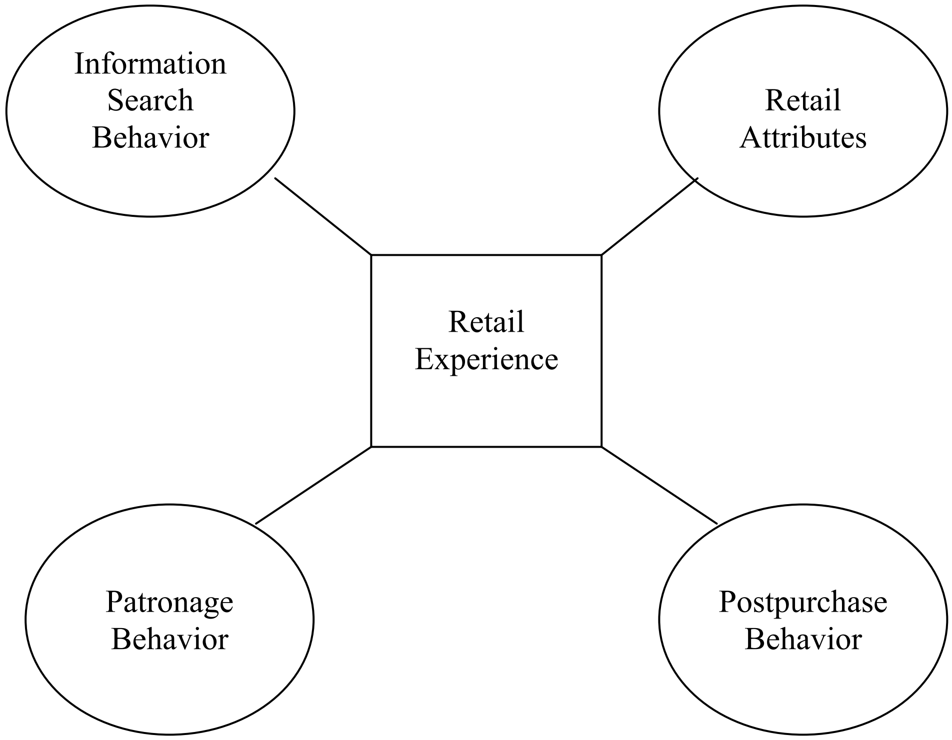



**Figure 2-2. Framework of Retail Experience**

## Information Search Behavior

In today's dynamic global environment, understanding how consumers acquire information is important at the micro level for marketing management decisions and at the macro level for public policy decisions (Srinivasan, 1990). For marketing managers, understanding information search determinants is crucial for designing effective marketing communication campaigns because "Information search represents the primary stage at which marketing can provide information and influence consumers' decisions" (Wilki & Dickson, 1985, p. 85).

According to Srinivasan (1990), there are three major theoretical streams of consumer information search literature. The first is the psychological/motivational approach, which incorporates the individual, the product class, and task-related variables. The second is the economics approach, which uses the cost-benefit framework to study information search. This paradigm rests on the assumption that consumers' search for information is equal to the marginal benefit of possessing a unit of information. Thus, information search will decrease as the costs of searching increase and will increase as the benefits of search increase. In addition, an increase in search cost raises the reservation price level and therefore increases the likelihood of less extensive search (Kohn & Shavell, 1974; Rothschild, 1973). The third is the consumer information processing approach, which focuses on memory and cognitive information processing limitations of humans.

Bettman and Park (1980) theorized that information search depends on both one's ability and one's motivations. Situational characteristics can also influence learning during the search. Evidence suggests that consumers who have less accessible to alternatives require a longer search and learning period since they are more likely to initially consider a larger set of alternatives (Golledge & Zannaras, 1973). In addition, product familiarity can facilitate the assimilation of new information, although too much experience can remove learning incentives (Johnson & Russo, 1984).

In an attempt to extend the information search literature beyond the bivariate relationship between one's ability and one's motivations that has been researched previously, Schmidt and Spreng (1996) present a comprehensive model that integrates the psychological search literature by incorporating ability and motivation to search for information and the economic paradigm that centers on the perceived costs and benefits of information search. The model shows that subjective knowledge has a positive indirect effect (through a positive effect on search, and through a negative effect on perceived search cost, which has a negative effect on search) and a negative indirect effect (through a negative effect on benefits of search, which then has a positive effect on search).

Past research in this area has focused on developing typologies of consumer information search strategies using nearly 60 variables that influence external information search. These typologies often include aspects of the environment (e.g., difficulty of the choice task, number of alternatives, complexity of the alternatives), situational variables (e.g., previous satisfaction, time constraints, perceived risk), and consumer characteristics (e.g., education, prior knowledge, involvement) (Srinivasan & Ratchford, 1991).

The information search process may be internal or external. Internal search occurs when consumers use information already stored in memory, whereas external search involves seeking information from the environment because the required information was not previously acquired or is unable to be recalled from memory. Beatty and Smith (1987, p. 85) defined external search effort as "the degree of attention, perception, and effort directed toward obtaining environmental data or information related to the specific purchase under consideration". The sources of information that are used during external search can be classified into several types: marketer controlled (e.g., personal selling, advertising, product information on package, product brochures), reseller information (e.g., catalogs by reseller, information charts, consultants), third –party independent organizations (e.g., Consumer Union, J.D. Powers, newspaper and magazines articles), interpersonal sources (e.g., friends, acquaintances), and direct inspection (e.g., observation, inferencing ) (Olshavsky & Wymer, 1995).

Information from noncommercial, personal sources has been found to be particularly influential in consumer decision-making. Furthermore, personal sources often are rated by consumers as the most important source of information (Katona & Mueller, 1955; Price & Feick, 1984; Robertson, 1971), especially when the information seeker perceives high risk (Arndt, 1967; Cunningham, 1964, 1967), or when consumers are generally susceptible to interpersonal influence (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989). Some studies also stressed the key role of consumers with special product knowledge or experience in interpersonal influence.

The significance of word-of-mouth sources in influencing marketplace choices has been well documented in consumer research (Dichter, 1966; Katona & Mueller, 1955; Kiel & Layton, 1981; Udell, 1966). Compared to the large number of studies on interpersonal information exchange for specific product classes, there are few studies on word-of-mouth communication in the retail setting (Moschis, 1976). The few existing studies have examined a particular store type or a particular product, and not attributes of a variety of store types (Kelly, 1967; Moschis, 1976).

Higie, Feick, and Price (1987) examined the frequency of word-of-mouth communications for several major types of retail outlets (e.g., department, discount, and grocery stores), and the frequency of such communications about store dimensions that are viewed by the consumer as important in developing store image. The authors found that, on all measured dimensions, consumers talk significantly more about grocery stores than discount stores or department stores on all dimensions. A probable explanation for this result is the greater frequency of visits to grocery stores than to discount or department stores.

Search activity is assumed to be motivated by three underlying factors; time, monetary resources, and transportation (Avery, 1996). The availability of time is determined by alternative time commitments such as employment, household production, and structured leisure activities. Monetary resources affect consumer search by limiting the marginal value of a dollar saved through search activity in grocery shopping. Limitations on mobility and the availability of transportation raise the cost of search and reduce the benefits of search because they limit the degree to which a consumer may shop around for alternative deals in the market.

Many studies have found that despite the obvious benefits derived from prepurchase search, consumers have surprisingly little enthusiasm for the pursuit, even when buying expensive and socially risky goods (Newman, 1977). Babin, Darden, and Griffin (1994) argue that some consumers engage in shopping behaviors for the hedonic value they receive rather than to achieve some specific prepurchase goal. In the consumer choice context, simplifying decision heuristics can include the repetitive buying of the same brand, following the choice example of others or limiting the number of attributes or alternatives considered. Clearly, the cognitive burden of a search problem increases as the number of attributes or alternatives increases, and disregarding information can be a rational strategy for reducing the "thinking cost" of a search problem (Shugan, 1989). While search activities appear to be generally limited in extent, they can vary with the type of good sought. Consumers search more extensively for higher priced goods. This relationship between search activity and product category is also evident for non-price attributes: consumers search more extensively for goods with important style and appearance characteristics.

Several researchers have proposed and supported the behavior of consumers whose involvement is not restricted to a particular product class or purchase intention (Hirschman, 1980; Kassarjian, 1981; Slama & Tashchian, 1985). It should be noted that consumers also acquire product-related information even when they are not planning to buy the product in the near term but rather sometime in the future. In the information search literature, search activities that are independent of specific purchase needs or decision are conceptualized as "ongoing search" (Bloch, Sherrel, & Ridgway, 1986). The term "ongoing" indicates that the behavior occurs on a relatively regular basis, independent of sporadic purchase needs. Ongoing search activities may involve two basic motives. The first is to acquire a bank of product information potentially useful in the future. The second motive is pleasure or recreation. In this case, the consumer engages in ongoing search for its intrinsic satisfaction. Bellenger and Korgankar (1980) found that many consumers enjoy the act of shopping itself, without respect to buying, while Bloch and Richins (1983) found that retail store browsing was positively related to product interest, product knowledge, and word-of-mouth activity concerning the product.

## Patronage Behavior

### Store Choice

Arnold, Ma, & Tigert (1978) compared the results of 12 proprietary studies on the determinant attributes affecting supermarket and women's fashion clothing shopping behavior. They concluded that the determinant attributes for supermarket selection included location, convenience, price, and assortment. Fast checkout was also reported to be an important attribute in the several supermarket studies. Further analysis indicated that while service and quality dimensions played an important role, they were less important determinants than location and prices and may have been relevant only after the latter two variables were considered.

Keng and Ehrenberg (1984) investigated how consumers choose between different stores for grocery products in the United Kingdom. The findings suggest that most buyers of a product at a particular chain or store group buy it there relatively infrequently. Hisrich, Dornoff, and Kernan (1972) found that perceived risk did have a bearing on the store selection process for consumer durables such as draperies, furniture and carpeting.

Previous findings on shopping behavior in developing countries lend some support to the notion that risk perception may be a determinant of grocery store selection (Hilger, 1980; Yavas, Kaynak, & Borak, 1981; Yavas & Riecken, 1981). Yavas and Riecken (1981) examined whether perceived risk is a determinant of supermarket patronage in developing countries by using Saudi Arabia as a case in point. Findings indicate that perceived risk is a correlate of store choice in general and leads to variations in grocery shopping characteristics. For instance, high- and low-risk perceivers were found to differ on the degree of emphasis they placed on patronage motives. Low-risk perceivers placed more importance on convenient hours, ease in getting around in the shopping area, wide assortment and availability of merchandise imported from a variety of countries than did the high-risk perceivers. On the other hand, high-risk perceivers viewed cleanliness of shopping area (store), being able to choose products with their own hands, price, availability of free samples, and ease in exchanging merchandise as the relatively more important factors.

**Situational Contexts**

Evidence indicates that time pressure and assortment requirements influence the choice of store/product. These situational conditions are often referred to in the literature as ‘task definitions’. Foxall and Goldsmith (1994) defined the task definition as “…the orientation, intention, role, or frame of a person through which certain aspects of the environment may become relevant”. From a marketing point of view, Belk (1975) defined it as “…the reasons that occasion the need for consumers to buy or consume a product or service.”

Task definitions are generally believed to be an important influence on an evaluation criterion’s salience (Miller & Ginter, 1979; Dickson 1982; Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995; Van Kenhove, De Wulf, & Van Waterrschoot, 1999). While Engel et al. (1995, p.798) do not refer to empirical research, they expressed the belief that task definitions could seriously impact a consumer’s store attribute saliences: “…consider the tremendous change in consumers’ price sensitivity across purchase situations. A grocer would find it extremely difficult to charge prices that consumers pay for soda and snacks at a movie theater or ballpark.”

In the fast-food restaurant decisions, Miller and Ginter (1979) discovered that different choice criteria were used according to four different usage situations. Thelen and Woodside (1997) showed that task definitions were powerful framing influences that would impact store attribute retrievals. Each of the different stores they studied were likely to be evoked in the context of different task definitions that were, in turn, associated with one or more unique benefits. According to them, a major reason why consumers were likely to retrieve a different store for each task definition was that they held unique goal-derived store categories in their long-term memories based upon prior shopping experiences.

A large number of store choice studies have reported that most aspects of store choice pertain to the merchandise, price, convenience in shopping and the like, which could be termed instrumental assuming that the primary end in shopping is purchasing wanted items. However, some researchers have argued that other important choice dimensions are expressive, such as the type of person's desire to command respect and attention rather than the purchase of goods.

Granbois (1977, p. 266) reports that the majority (75-80 percent) of all soft goods purchases are made after visiting a single store. Deliberation and true choice might be expected to be at a maximum among residents new to an area. Convenience and past loyalty to chains in the previous area are important criteria in making selections. However, new patterns are established quickly – supermarkets are selected within three weeks, several other store types are picked in five weeks (p.272).

In a study of store selection using retrospective accounts, Mackay and Olshavsky (1975) found that nine percent of the sample reported to have made no choice; patronage occurred instead on bases such as personal recommendations or preferences acquired in early childhood. Olshavsky (1973) analyzed tape-recorded conversation between consumer and salesman for major appliance transactions. This study provided clear evidence for a limited use of pre-store search activity by consumers.

Buttle (1992) described shopping as "a contextualized act. Shopping is not merely shopping. Shopping trips are made in a variety of contexts: the motives for shopping for gifts are not the same as the motives for shopping for groceries; " (Buttle, 1992, p. 358).

One of the most common episodes is shopping for groceries and household items. The shopping context affects motivations, levels of participation and satisfaction. Grocery and household shopping, for instance, is generally thought of as a pleasureless chore. It is considered to be mundane, part of the household routine and therefore more likely to be the domain of females. The image of the supermarket as a place where basic needs are satisfied also tends to be associated with women because routine shopping is part of housework rather than leisure (Lunt & Livingstone, 1992).

Shopping is also a gendered activity. Available research on shopping behavior seems to suggest it is women who go shopping and that shopping is categorized as a "female typed" task (South & Spitze, 1994). Fram and Axelrod (1990) report that females have the primary responsibility for household shopping. In a 1992 consumer research study for instance, 73 per cent of qualified food shopping respondents were female (IMRA, 1993). Similarly, in tracking shopping center usage between 1986 and 1991, the dominant female:male ratio (2:1) has remained relatively constant. Clothes shopping, on the other hand, is considered to be more attractive; "it is an opportunity for self-expression, fantasy, a break from the normal routine of shopping and perhaps a little self-indulgence" (Buttle, 1992, p. 361). It is considered to be more recreational and expressive.

There are many reasons to go shopping in a market-based economy (Tauber, 1972). Social reasons are particularly important: "shopping is a spectacle in which one is both performer and spectator. it is seeing and being seen, meeting and being met, a way of interacting with others" (Lunt & Livingstone, 1992, p. 189). Their study empirically demonstrated three motives for going shopping based on factor analysis of 13 statements.

These three factors have been labeled as: 1) interactions with family; 2) utilitarian; and 3) shopping as pleasure. The commitment of time and effort to the shopping activities are directly related to the number (and duration) of shopping trips made by a household member. The shopping context is a major determinant of household shopping frequency - groceries are purchased more frequently than clothing or gifts. Shopping frequency is also likely to be directly influenced by the individual's shopping responsibility and his/her sex. To understand the effect of changing social conditions, it is also important to investigate the feelings associated with this activity.

Lunt and Livingstone (1992) have looked at enjoyment associated with going shopping - to the supermarket or to the mall. Because of its expressive and recreational nature, going shopping for clothing to the mall is expected to be satisfying and rewarding. Shopping for household groceries at the supermarket, on the other hand, is likely to be regarded as routine and mundane. Several shopper types have also been identified. Some researchers have specifically focused on recreational shoppers (Bellenger & Korgaonkar, 1980; Lesser & Hughes, 1986). Bloch, Ridgway, and Dawson (1994) have identified four types of shoppers - enthusiasts, traditionalists, grazers and minimalists in the context of shopping behaviors in malls. Any investigation of shopping behaviors, therefore, has to consider the specific characteristics of the shopping context.

Hansen and Deutscher (1977-78) found that consumers who do not enjoy shopping understandably want to spend as little time as possible in doing it. They want to reach the store quickly and easily, and to check out of rapidly. Furthermore, it is important to these consumers that returns and adjustments be as little trouble as possible. On the other hand, the people who do enjoy shopping place much more emphasis on low prices and specially priced items. Advertising is more important to them and so are the retailer's sales personnel.

### Travel Time and Method

Consumers will generally have different attitudes associated with the use of a given mode of transportation. Some will prefer to use public transit to visit the traditional central city retail facility, while others will use their cars. The cost of transportation may dominate for some shoppers, especially where they have limited access to personal transportation such as a car. For others, safety might be a factor. The nearest center might, for example, be within walking distance. However, because of the possible danger involved in walking through any given neighborhood, respondents might not find this appropriate and might choose other transport modes to centers that might well be more distant. Bucklin and Gautschi (1983) evaluated the contribution of factors associated directly with shopper choice of travel mode to choice of retail facility. They found that three travel characteristics (e.g., safety, cost, and comfort) affect shopping center choice.

The choice of transportation mode has been a major focus in studies aimed at understanding the factors affecting the usage of automobile (e.g., safety, convenience, travel atmosphere, reliability, flexibility, comfort of ride, protection from weather, and cost of use), especially with respect to work destination (McFadden, 1980; Sherret & Wallace, 1973;). Bucklin and Gautschi (1983) argue that the set of transportation utilities associated with shopping at a specific retail facility may be seen as a function of both distance and the mode to be used. These utilities will, therefore, be determined by shoppers' values and by the cost to shoppers of the modes available.

**Shopping Time**

Previous studies support the notion that time spent shopping varies between different consumer categories and directly affects the time spent on other activities (Arndt & Gronmo, 1980; Hawes, 1979). Waiting in checkout lines in grocery stores is a necessary but undesirable activity that customers must undertake to complete their purchases. Comm and Palachek (1984) investigated the effects of various lengths of waiting times on individuals' regret time levels in a grocery store waiting line. The results of this study indicate that the individual's regret level and the amount of time he/she spends waiting in line affects his/her shopping behavior. In other words, individuals with high regret levels in long waiting lines will alter their shopping behavior by switching stores in the future and shopping at off-peak times. However, these same individuals also indicated that they would not switch grocery stores in the future if they were given reasonable discounts on their groceries or anticipated the long wait before entering the store. In a laboratory study, Tom and Lucey (1995) concluded that customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction is dependent not only on the perceived waiting time but also on the customer identification of the causes, as well as the stability and control of the causes.

**Adjusting to new environment**

Andreasen and Durkson (1968) examined the task of learning about and adjusting to a new market environment. Market learning of new alternatives involves learning in the more conventional sense – discovering, forming attitudes toward, trying out, and at times, adopting new market alternatives. Their study focused on one small phase of this complex adjustment process, namely, the learning of brand alternatives in a new market and patterns of change in brand knowledge and brand behavior over time in the new environment. Two market alternatives were identified, old alternative and new alternative. Old alternatives are those already familiar to the mover through contacts in other communities or in the national media. New alternatives are those brands, products, and institutions unique to the particular locality or region into which the consumer has moved and with which he is initially unfamiliar.

The total effect of these adjustment activities would be a gradual modification over time of the newcomer's market knowledge, attitudes, and behavior toward community norms similar to the modification occurring in other dimensions of the person's new community life (Andreasen & Durkson, 1968). Results indicate that active learning by information seeking and brand experimentation is done by new residents in their early months in the new market. Some of the principal conclusions of this study were: 1) There is substantial variation in the rate and kind of change in knowledge and behavior among and within product types; and 2) differences in adjustment patterns among brands will only partially be explainable by promotional variables in the local market.

## Retail Attributes

### Store Image

Evidence indicates that consumers make judgments and select stores based on subjective ratings on various image dimensions (Fisk, 1961-1962; Kunkel & Berry, 1968; Martineau, 1958). Martineau (1958) suggested that there are four ingredients of a store's personality: layout and architecture, symbols and color, advertising, and sales personnel. Lindquist (1975) systematically reviewed the published results of some 19 studies and synthesized their frameworks into a set of nine categories that he called image/attitude attributes. These attributes are: *merchandise*, including factors such as quality, assortment, styling or fashion, guarantees and price; *service*, encompassing staff service, ease of return, credit and delivery service; *clientele*, consisting of social class appeal, self image congruency and store personnel; *physical facilities*, such as layout and architecture; *convenience*, primarily location related; *promotion*, including sales promotions, product displays, advertising programs, symbols and colors; *store atmosphere*, defined as "atmosphere congeniality" which represents a customer's feeling of warmth, acceptance or ease; *institutional factors*, such as the conservative or modern projection of store, reputation and reliability; and *post-transaction satisfaction*, seen as returns and adjustments.

The interplay of these tangible and intangible elements and the customers' overall interpretation of them, based upon previous knowledge and experiences, are widely accepted to determine store image (Hirschman, 1980; Marzursky & Jacoby, 1985; Wu & Petroshius, 1987; Zimmer & Golden, 1988). The majority of these studies explore image, taken as the consumer perception of the overall store image, relative to specific purchase behavior contexts or specific store and service attributes.

## Convenience Orientation

Convenience orientation refers to the value placed on, and the active search for, products and services that provide personal comfort and/or save time in performing various activities (Brown, 1991). Convenience-oriented consumption is not limited to the purchase of only low-risk or low-involvement products and services. Indeed, prior studies clearly suggest that convenience-driven demand exists for a diversity of low-and high-involvement/risk products and services, ranging from frozen foods to microwave ovens (see, for example, Bellizzi & Hite, 1992; Brown, 1991; Reilly, 1982; Yavas & Riecken, 1981). The convenience orientation is also manifested in the use of various home shopping modes and pick-up and delivery services (Brown, 1991; Lavin, 1993).

Past research reveals that the convenience orientation is a multidimensional construct. For example, Yale and Venkatesh (1986) proposed that it could be decomposed into six major dimensions: time use, accessibility, portability, appropriateness, handiness, and avoidance of unpleasantness. Brown (1991) suggests five dimensions: time, place, acquisition, use and execution; with the exception of the last, these closely parallel the four utilities promulgated by economic utility theory (Brown, 1991).

A close examination of the original work by Yale and Venkatesh (1985) and Brown (1991) suggests that their dimensions relate primarily to two universal human tendencies: a *time-saving orientation* and a *comfort orientation*. These two combined make up the convenience orientation and account for the consumption of convenience-driven goods and services.

## Retail Service

The nature of retail service varies from personal service, loyalty programs, returns policy, and the provision of a more pleasant atmosphere. Indeed, anything that adds value to the merchandise itself can be considered part of the service provided by the retailer (Merrilees & Miller, 2001). The concept of benefit segmentation rests on the idea that consumers select products/services on the basis of the benefits they desire (Haley 1968; Reynolds & Gutman, 1984). According to Darden and Dorsch (1990), consumers can also obtain benefits, such as product or information acquisition or social interaction, from shopping. Thus, consumers can receive benefits from interpersonal relationships, which serve to fill many important human needs (McAdams, 1988). Beatty, Mayer, Coleman, Reynolds, & Lee (1996), in a naturalistic inquiry into customer relationships with salespeople in an upscale department store context, observed that the benefits customers claim to receive from these types of relationships appeared to fall into two primary categories: functional benefits or social benefits. According to Gwinner, Gremler, & Bitner (1998), customers who have relationships with service providers not only expect to receive satisfactory delivery of the core service, but they are likely to receive additional benefits customers receive from service relationship.

Close personal relationships can satisfy certain personal needs (McAdams, 1988). According to Adelman, Ahuvia, & Goodwin (1994), a relationship with a salesperson or service provider may give a customer social support. The customer and salesperson/service provider may even develop a friendship, which may serve to enhance the customer's quality of life (Bitner, 1990). Beatty et al. (1996) found that long-term customers often described their relationships with their salesperson in social terms and strong customer-salesperson friendships were common in their study. Reynolds and Beatty (1999) examined the benefits customers receive from relationships with clothing/accessory salespeople. They found that relationship benefits are positively associated with satisfaction, loyalty, word of mouth and purchases.

Service quality is found to be a significant predictor of behavioral intentions, e.g. likelihood of recommending, repeat purchase, switching, and/or complaining (Bitner, 1990). Woodside, Frey, and Daly (1989) have found in their study that there is a significant association between service quality and repurchase behavior. This is echoed by findings in the study of Dabholkar, Thorpe, & Rentz (1996) that there is a statistical relationship between the level of retail service quality and the likelihood of recommending and repeat purchase. As a result of numerous focus groups, Dabholkar et al. (1996) developed the Retail Service Quality Scale that includes five dimensions:

1. *Physical aspects*. Store appearance and convenience of store layout.
2. *Reliability*. Retailer keeps its promises and "does things right".
3. *Personal interaction*. Associates are courteous, helpful and they inspire confidence and trust from the customer.
4. *Problem solving*. Associates are trained to handle potential problems, such as customer complaints, returns and exchanges.
5. *Policy*. Operating hours, payment options, store charge cards, parking and so forth.

## Post-Purchase Behavior

### Satisfaction

Research on consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction has focused predominately upon consumers' evaluations of specific goods and services consumed. In contrast, there has been very little study of consumer satisfaction relative to other aspects of the marketing system such as retailing establishments. Few research efforts on the subject of store and retail satisfaction have been reported in the literature. While these isolated studies offer some useful insights, they leave many important theoretical and empirical questions unanswered. Westbrook (1981) points out two reasons are devoted more attention to store satisfaction. First, the conceptual domain of consumer satisfaction is not limited to product usage experience. Second, retailers require knowledge not only of consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the products their outlet offers, but also with other facets of shopping, buying, and interacting with the outlet itself. Tauber (1972) also suggests that some of the non-product satisfaction offered by retail outlets might be as significant as, if not more significant than, product related satisfactions in determining consumer patronage behavior.

The customer has different expectations in interacting with the different objects, so the objects should be evaluated separately. According to Singh (1991) there may be several distinct, separate "objects" about which a consumer will make a satisfaction judgment. Oliver & Swan (1989) found differences in terms of the antecedents and consequences for salesperson and store satisfaction. Westbrook (1981) concluded that consumers could experience satisfaction from their overall experience with the store and from interactions with salespeople, among other things.

Individual characteristics and social constraints are shown to affect perceptions of satisfaction and all levels of the complaint process. Specially, personality, socioeconomic and demographic variables, and a variety of social influence (e.g., norm and social risks) have been suggested as affecting consumer tendencies to complain. Satisfaction generally is conceptualized as an attitude-like judgment following a purchase act or based on a series of consumer-product interactions (Yi, 1990). The popular view is that the confirmation/disconfirmation of pre-consumption product standards is the essential determinant of satisfaction (Oliver, 1997). This consumer satisfaction paradigm posits that confirmed standards lead to moderate satisfaction; positively disconfirmed (exceeded) standards lead to high satisfaction, and negatively disconfirmed (underachieved) standards lead to dissatisfaction.

A few consumer satisfaction paradigm researchers have gone beyond the cognitively toned model formulations to consider the affective nature of satisfaction (Oliver, 1997; Westbrook, 1987). Perhaps most intriguing is Oliver's (1989) suggestion that five different modes or prototypes of satisfaction exist: contentment (with its primary affect of acceptance of tolerance); pleasure (a positive reinforcement state that involves the evocation or enhancement of a positive; well-liked experience and a primary affect of happiness); relief (a negative reinforcement state occurring when an aversive state is removed); novelty (expectations of the unexpected that yield a primary affect of interest or excitation); and surprise ( a primary affect of either delight or outrage as occurs when the product performs outside the range of expectations). Studies in investigating an affective component of satisfaction (Mano & Oliver, 1993; Westbrook, 1987; Westbrook & Oliver, 1991) explicate the dimensionality of affect and examine the role of affect in satisfaction judgments. However, satisfaction is not solely a cognitive phenomenon. It also comprises elements of affect or feeling, in that consumers feel subjectively good in connection with satisfaction, and bad in connection with dissatisfaction.

Hunt (1977) argues that the presence of affect derives from the evaluation of product outcomes and experiences rather than from the pleasureableness of the latter. An unsolved issue is whether the affective element proceeds, or is concurrent with, judgments of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. These affective influences do not deny the role of cognitive processes such as expectancy confirmation or disconfirmation, but rather combine with them in the determination of consumer satisfaction. In addition to affect, the construct of satisfaction also involves an element of conation, in that high levels are associated with intentions to repeat the purchase choice if faced again by a similar buying situation, and low levels with intentions to purchase differently.

While existing studies tend to focus on individual subjects and consumption experiences, there is a recent trend toward aggregation. Johnson (1995) argues that studying customer satisfaction should result in more reliable empirical generalizations in an area where disparate empirical findings are common. He also emphasizes the importance of taking a macro-psychological perspective on customer satisfaction where satisfaction is itself a cumulative, abstract construct on which a variety of products and services may be compared. For instance, the application of occasion aggregation to satisfaction research centers on the distinction between “transaction specific” satisfaction and “cumulative” satisfaction (Johnson, Anderson, & Fornell, 1995). Transaction specific satisfaction is a customer’s evaluation of a particular product or service experience

(Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Cumulative satisfaction is the customer's evaluation of their entire purchase and consumption experience to-date (Johnson et al., 1995).

Satisfaction has been conceptualized in terms of either a single transaction (i.e., an evaluation judgment following the purchase occasion) or a series of interactions with a product over time. Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann (1994) note that nearly all satisfaction research has adopted the transaction-specific view. However, Tse and Wilton (1988) contend that (1) satisfaction is not an evaluative state but a process extending across the entire consumption horizon and (2) the study of consumer-product interactions following purchase is fundamental to advancing knowledge along these lines.

Although the tie between consumer satisfaction and quality of life has been presumed (Oliver, 1997; Yi, 1990), it has received virtually no theoretical or empirical attention in marketing. Interestingly, outside of marketing, researchers of life satisfaction have expressed only limited interest in consumer-product interactions as a source of happiness or well-being. The state of this theorizing is captured in the prevailing hypothesis that increased ownership of material possessions leads to greater satisfaction with life (Campbell, 1980).

In early 1970s, consumer satisfaction began to emerge as a legitimate field of inquiry. Both Olshavsky and Miller (1972) and Anderson (1973) examined disconfirmed expectancies and their influence on product performance ratings. These two studies along with Cardozo's (1964) experiment formed the foundation for much of the later theory testing and experimental research. Since the early 1970s, numerous theoretical structures have been proposed to examine the antecedents of satisfaction and develop meaningful measures of construct. The vast majority of these studies have used the disconfirmation paradigm that holds that satisfaction is related to the size and direction of the disconfirmation experience, where disconfirmation is related to the person's initial expectations.

By the late 1970s, the focus of consumer satisfaction research has shifted to the relationship among perceived expectations, disconfirmation, and satisfaction (Oliver, 1980; Olson & Dover, 1976; Swan & Trawick, 1981). In general, these studies indicate the importance of disconfirmation as an intervening variable in the satisfaction process. Oliver's (1980) study relating antecedents of satisfaction (expectation and disconfirmation) with consequences (post purchase attitude and intention) is very meaningful in terms of setting the direction for more extensive model development.

Fornell (1992) suggests that satisfaction can be assessed directly as an overall feeling and customers have an "ideal" norm. Cadotte, Woodruff, and Jenkins (1987) suggest two different norms customers may use as the "ideal" for comparison. First, the norm might be the typical performance of a particular brand such as the most preferred, the last purchased, the most popular, or other. A second possibility is that the norm might be an average performance that a customer believed is typical for a group of similar brands within a product category, thus a product norm. Therefore, experience with and knowledge of the product class or related products may be an important determinant of how customers judge product or service performance.

It is generally agreed that expectations are consumer-defined probabilities of the occurrence of positive or negative events if the consumer engages in some behavior (Olson & Dover, 1976; Oliver, 1980). This definition applies equally to product purchase, store patronage, and complaining behavior. Consumers are thought to assimilate satisfaction levels to expectation levels in order to avoid the dissonance that would arise when expectations and satisfaction level diverge. This assimilation effect results in satisfaction judgments' being high/low when expectations are high/low (Oliver, 1997), and the majority of the empirical findings support a positive relationship between expectations and satisfaction (Bearden & Teel, 1983; Oliver & Linda, 1981; Swan & Trawick, 1981). Swan and Trawick (1981) propose that expectation may have two basic components: first, an expected level of performance and satisfaction, and secondly, the user's estimate of how likely it would be that the expected level of performance would be realized when the product is used. Research has shown that an expectation effect has less impact on satisfaction than does disconfirmation.

The satisfaction literature suggests consumers may use different "types" of expectations when forming opinions about a product's anticipated performance. Miller (1976) identified four types of expectations: ideal, expected, minimum tolerable, and desirable. Day (1977) distinguished three categories among expectations: 1) expectation about the nature of the product and (anticipated benefits to be derived directly from the product or service itself); 2) expectations about the costs and efforts which will be expended in obtaining the direct benefits of the product or service (the anticipated total costs); and 3) expectations of social approval or other derived benefits or costs resulting from the purchase.

In the satisfaction research literature, disconfirmation occupies a central position as a crucial intervening variable. Disconfirmation arises from discrepancies between prior expectations and actual performance. Oliver (1977) has stressed the importance of measuring disconfirmation apart from expectation, as he maintains the construct has an independent, additive effect on satisfaction. However, in the traditional paradigm it is difficult to manipulate disconfirmation independently of expectation and performance because it is defined as the difference between these two variables.

Swan and Trawick (1981) suggest that disconfirmation has two dimensions: inferred and perceived disconfirmation. Inferred disconfirmation refers to the difference between the customers’ postrating and prerating of the product or store. Perceived disconfirmation refers to be the users’ perception that the performance of the object was better or worse than expected. Studies that measured both concepts of disconfirmation have found a significant relationship between the two. Findings in their study indicate that the satisfaction is more sensitive to inferred than perceived disconfirmation. They also suggest that perceived disconfirmation involves the respondent in a comparison of results and expected performance, may not be recalled accurately. Inferred disconfirmation does not require respondent recall of anticipated performance since it is measured prior to consumption.

The primary importance of performance in the satisfaction literature has been as a standard of comparison by which to assess disconfirmation. In addition to performance as a component of disconfirmation, performance has been modeled as directly affecting satisfaction (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Halstead, Hartman, & Schmidt, 1994; Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988; Tse & Wilton, 1988). Olshavsky and Miller (1972) and Olson and Dover (1976) manipulated actual product performance, but their emphasis was on how performance ratings were influenced by expectations rather than on the impact of changes in performance level on satisfaction. If performance judgments are assimilated toward expectations, we might expect increases in performance to have relatively little impact on satisfaction if expectations remain constant.

Measurement issues started getting attentions in the early 1980s (Westbrook, 1981; Westbrook & Oliver, 1981). Despite the complexity of the construct of satisfaction, consumer researchers have used rather simple measures, most often single-item rating scales of four to seven points between extremes of “very satisfied” and “very dissatisfied”. The fact that these measures commonly yield very skewed distribution of responses suggests that the scales may be insufficiently sensitive to detect the gradations of consumers’ sentiments. In addition, there is some evidence that such rating scales indicate higher levels of satisfaction than the analyses of content from free responses to unstructured questions (Andreasen, 1977).

Typically, measurements of satisfaction with products/services and retailers are based on direct subjective estimation of the intensity or frequency of overall satisfaction experienced by consumers. Most often, simple single-item rating scales are employed. There has been little uniformity in the number of scale steps used or nature of verbal anchoring, however, they range from 3-point fully labeled rating scales to 10- 11-point variants labeled only at the extremes and midpoint. In an effort to test and evaluate a number of measurement approaches specific to the satisfaction construct, Westbrook and Oliver (1981) tested the five variations of instruments that included various verbal, graphic, Likert, and semantic-differential items. The results indicate that the Likert and semantic-differential scales had the highest reliabilities and convergent and discriminant validities. Andreasen (1977) reports some evidence that a 4-point rating scale overreported satisfaction compared to judgments based on various open-ended questions.

Moreover, satisfaction studies have typically resulted in “bunching” of respondents at the upper end of the satisfaction continuum. Oliver and Westbrook (1982) raised a question of whether the cognitive-evaluative, affective, and conative elements of satisfaction can be adequately captured in a single 5- or 7- point “very satisfied --- very dissatisfied” rating scale.

**Retail Satisfaction**

While satisfaction is most readily associated with the purchase and consumption of specific products or services, it may also be relevant for shopping and patronage at retail outlets, for media usage, and even overall participation in the marketplace (Czepiel et al., 1975). Thus, consumer satisfaction refers to an evaluative response concerning the perceived outcomes of experiences in the consumer domain, comprising acquisition, consumption, and disposition activity (Oliver & Westbrook, 1982).

In connection with their evaluations of outcomes, Oliver and Westbrook (1982) suggest that consumers may experience varying degrees of feeling or emotion. Favorably evaluated outcomes are associated with happy, pleasant feelings, and unfavorably evaluated outcomes with unhappiness, irritation, or regret. In addition, the notion of satisfaction implies some degree of conation in that the consumer is more or less inclined to repeat the behavior in question given recurrence of the situation in which it was initially performed.

Comprehensive investigations of retail satisfaction are rare. Pickle and Rungeling (1973) developed a series of measures to assess customer satisfaction with various types of business firms, including retailer. Miller (1976) studied consumer satisfaction with grocery stores, comparing the suitability of alternative measures and exploring demographic variations in reported satisfaction. He found a positive relationship between self-reports of store satisfaction and patronage frequency. Maddox (1977) researched the same topic, attempting to link consumers' perceptions of store characteristics to the level of satisfaction they expressed. Modest relationships were observed with different store characteristics and satisfaction depending on particular retail outlet under study.

Swan (1977) examined the cognitive progresses leading to consumer satisfaction with a new department store. He also reported weak but significant demographic variations in store satisfaction. Miller (1976) proposed that the levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with a given store might differ among customer segments. Individuals with different socioeconomic characteristics may be expected to have different degrees of satisfaction with a given store. In other words, given that groups of individuals share common experiences, characteristics, and attitudes, it is possible that levels of expectation and subsequent satisfaction would differ systematically for different segments of the population. For example, more affluent shoppers probably have higher expectations and are therefore less easily satisfied than their less affluent counterparts. As shoppers grow older or more experienced, it might be predicted that their expectations become more realistic. Van Raaij (1989) conducted a mail survey study regarding 36 different consumer problems with about 3,000 consumers in a Netherlands city using the mail survey method. Results indicate that consumers with different socioeconomic characteristics perceive and experience different numbers and types of consumer problems, and that younger people experience more problems with commercial information. Lower income and "full nest" family respondents had more problems with usage costs and product quality, while male and upper class consumers had more problems with after-sales service.

From the perspective of both the retailer and manufacturer, customer satisfaction is an important issue because it is related to several desirable outcomes. It affects future purchase intentions – satisfied customers are more likely to purchase the same product from the same source. Satisfied customers also can provide a steady flow of word-of-mouth promotion, thereby reducing the expense required to find new customers (Swan & Oliver, 1985). In addition, customer satisfaction reduces the size of the set of productions and minimizes switching behavior among previous purchasers.

Product performance is an important determinant of overall customer satisfaction, but it is not the only one. For example, Westbrook (1981) indicates that retail salespeople influence overall customer satisfaction with a purchase. Emotional reactions to a sales interaction may affect consumer satisfaction with the purchase experience and future purchase intentions (Babin, Boles, & Darden, 1995). It has been suggested that "non-product satisfaction offered by retailers may be just as important as product-related satisfaction in determining customer patronage" (Westbrook, 1981, p. 69). For big-ticket retail purchases the quality of the customer-salesperson communication appears to affect satisfaction with the product (Goff, Boles, Bellenger, & Stojack, 1997; Oliver & Swan, 1989). These findings suggest that the large costs associated with product development and promotion can be, at least partially, negated by the poor performance of a sales person at a retail location and by a dissatisfying customer interaction with the retailer. Furthermore, retail sales training emphasizing customer orientation, can add additional value to a company's product offering and influence customer perceptions of the retailer, product and manufacturer. It also may generate more favorable word-of-mouth promotion.

While overall customer dissatisfaction may be due to inherently poor service or insufficient quality, Van Kenhove et al. (1999) suggest that the task definition itself can exert a large influence on satisfaction levels through its relationship with consumer expectations toward the store (Paraasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Rust & Zahorik, 1993). Traditional interpretations of customer satisfaction generally do no take into account the different store-attribute saliences, which are important for a special task definition. If a customer has different expectations related to his or her task definition, the level of customer satisfaction toward the store and its attributes will probably differ as well. This may well imply that researchers should consider a different level of aggregation in order to measure the customer satisfaction construct.

## Conceptualization of Retail satisfaction

Renoux's (1973) framework for studying consumer discontent can be considered as the one of the early attempts to distinguish retail satisfaction/dissatisfaction as a meaningful construct. He proposed that consumer dissatisfaction might be experienced in connection with three principal aspects of the marketing system including shopping system dissatisfaction, buying system dissatisfaction and consuming system dissatisfaction. Shopping system dissatisfaction comprises consumers' evaluations of availability of products and types of retail outlets in a given market. Buying system dissatisfaction is concerned with consumers' sentiments in the course of selecting, purchasing, and receiving products from the store patronized. Finally, consuming system dissatisfaction describes consumers' evaluations of the usage and consumption of particular goods and services. Czepiel et al. (1975) develop the notion of "enterprise satisfaction" to describe what consumers gain in their dealings with complex product and service organization (e.g., retail stores and health care facilities) versus product/service satisfaction, which refers to what consumers obtain from their consumption of specific goods and services.

Westbrook (1981) proposes that consumer satisfaction with a retail establishment may be viewed as an individual's emotional reaction to his or her evaluation of the total set of experiences realized from patronizing that retailer. In contrast, product/service satisfaction refers to the consumer's emotional response to his or her evaluation of the experiences obtained from usage, consumption, and ownership of the specific good or service. The total set of experiences realized in patronizing a retailer is exceptionally diverse, inasmuch as retail establishments are complex organizations comprising products, people, physical environments, policies, and procedures. The varied consumer experiences in connection with retail patronage can be categorized into two broad types: (1) experiences related to being in the store itself and dealing with the organization, and (2) experiences related to consuming the products and services obtained from the retailer. Westbrook (1981) defined the retail satisfaction as the global sentiment of satisfaction or dissatisfaction that results from some form of aggregation by the consumer in regard to specific retailer-related experiences. Although he suggested a few alternatives to explain the aggregation process, the nature of the aggregation process was not fully conceptualized or empirically tested in his study.

Etzel and Silverman (1981) investigated consumer satisfaction from the point of view of the retailer, taking into consideration the existing studies and the opinions of 22 retail executives. The four responses of retailers were addressed: 1) to simply ignore customers' complaint - the retailers can ignore complaint letter, make excuses, blame the manufacture (for product complaint), and generally avoid responsibility for any product and service shortcoming; 2) to evaluate complaints and design equitable responses that might range from no adjustments to total refunds or replacement; 3) to make a partial or total adjustment no matter how unreasonable the complaint; and 4) to encourage complaining behavior. They also pointed out several retailer-controlled sources of expectations, including advertising, selling conditions (e.g., store appearance, personnel, prices), and postpurchase interactions (e.g., billing, service, return privileges).

**Complaint Behavior**

The managerial importance of understanding dissatisfaction and its outcomes goes beyond the truism that satisfied customers are loyal customers. Fornell and Robinson (1983) documented the value of complaints, both as a communication mechanism and as a means of giving the firm an opportunity to turn an unhappy customer into a satisfied, loyal customer. Fornell and Wernerfelt (1987) used economic theory and statistical analysis to demonstrate how complaint management can become a tool of defensive marketing and concluded that, in general, it is cost effective for a firm to spend 200% of the profit margin associated with a sale to turn a dissatisfied customer into a satisfied customer. Clearly, outcomes of customer dissatisfaction, or "consumer complaint behavior" (CCB) have been of increasing interest to marketing firms and marketing researchers over the last decade (Bearden & Teel, 1983; Day, 1984; Richins, 1983; Singh 1988, 1990; Westbrook, 1987).

The extensive consumer complaining behavior (CCB) literature that has emerged since the 1970s has focused almost exclusively on United States (U.S.) consumers, and the few CCB studies conducted outside the U.S. have suffered from a lack of integrating theory of how culture influences CCB (Watkins & Liu, 1996). Research in cultural psychology has found that individuals' value, concepts of the self, perceptions of others, and patterns of interaction with their environment are profoundly affected by the "cultural meaning systems" (Triandis, 1989) in which they operate. Similarly, patterns of response to post-purchase dissatisfaction may be expected to be affected by culture.

Complaining behavior can be defined as a mechanism as available to consumers for relieving cognitive dissonance when the consumption experience is dissatisfying (Oliver 1989); a mechanism for venting anger and frustration; a mechanism for initiating or seeking redress for failed consumption experiences (Nyer, 1997). A few cross-cultural studies have also examined attitudes towards CCB. Barksdale, Perreault, Arndt, Barnhill, French, Halliday, and Zif (1982) compared attitudes in the Australia, Canada, the UK, Israel, Norway, and the United States. In these studies, positive attitudes toward complaining were found to be positively associated with the level of a country's economic development. More recently, Richins and Verhage (1985) found that U.S. and Dutch consumers held different attitudes towards complaining, They found that Dutch consumers were more concerned about negative social consequences (being looked down on or suffering embarrassment when complaining) and less motivated by a sense of accomplishment for themselves or for society than were U.S. consumers. They, like earlier researchers, conclude that attitudes toward complaining are likely to vary across cultures. However, they had very little to say about how culture affects CCB. All of these studies have suffered from the lack of any investigating theory concerning the impact of culture on CCB.

Singh (1988) has pointed out that there is substantial agreement in conceptualizing the CCB phenomenon “as a set of multiple (behavioral and non-behavioral) responses, some or all of which are triggered by perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode.” Drawing on Hirschman’s (1970) model for exit, voice, and loyalty, Singh (1990) proposed a model that predicts and explains variation in voice, exit, and negative word-of-mouth behaviors. The model was tested using data on customer dissatisfaction with three different service categories – automobile repair, medical care, and grocery shopping. The findings indicate that the incidence of voice behavior was lowest for medical care and highest for auto repair. CCB behaviors have been generally viewed as falling into one of three categories: “exit” (the failure to rebuy the offending product), “voice” (complaining behavior addressed to the manufacturer or retail outlet), or “negative word-of-mouth” to friends and associates (Richins, 1983; Singh, 1990). This effect is especially likely when the product or service failure is severe, attributions for the failure are external, or high levels of social activity characterize the disappointed consumer (Folkes, 1988; Richins, 1983).

Negative word-of-mouth (WOM) offers consumers a mechanism for releasing tension, getting back at the entity by informing others of disappointing encounters, regaining control over a distressing situation, gaining sympathy form others, and/or conveying to others that the consumer has high standards (Nyer, 1997). Importantly, these are largely independent behaviors; a consumer may complain to a retailer, or tell friends about the problem, or switch products, or do any combination of the three, in response to a single dissatisfying consumption incident (Richins, 1983).

Several authors have pointed to the importance of properly defining and conceptualizing CCB (Bearden & Teel, 1983; Landon, 1977; Singh, 1988) and various formal classification approaches or taxonomies of CCB behaviors have been suggested. Using cluster analytic techniques and a U.S. sample, Singh (1988) found empirical support for a three dimensional taxonomy involving “voice responses” (e.g., seek redress from seller, no-action), “private responses” (e.g., word-of-mouth communication), and “third party responses” (e.g., take legal action). Significantly, however, Singh’s results may have limited applicability outside the U.S. where less well-developed consumer advocacy infrastructures exist. Moreover, what concepts like voice or exit mean in terms of behavior in other national/cultural contexts may be different from in the United States. For example, in the United States, exit usually implies switching to another supplier of the product category entirely. Finally, it is possible that other culturally driven complaint options are possible.

Various attributes of the complaint environment have been found to impact CCB. In particular, likelihood of voice and negative word-of-mouth (exit) vary directly (inversely) with the degree of industry concentration (which influences the availability of alternatives to the dissatisfying product) (Fornell & Robinson, 1983; Singh, 1990). Similarly, as the perceived difficulty or costs of complaining increases, the probability of voice decreases and the probability of exit increases (Richins, 1983). However, both industry concentration and the availability of voice mechanism (e.g., 1-800 numbers, consumer affairs organizations, etc.) are likely function of the complexity and state of development of a nation's economic infrastructure.

Complaints about government, employers, and institutions such as universities are more often made to fellow sufferers rather than to individuals in positions of influence. There are very likely various explanations for this behavior, including feelings of helpless ness, intimidations, past failures, or the inaccessibility of influentials. Two suggestions were offered to deal with this group (Bernhardt, 1981): 1) improve the complaint mechanism in order to encourage dissatisfied customers to voice their complaints; and 2) conduct periodic surveys of all customers to identify the problem of noncomplainers.

# CHAPTER 3
# METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

Chapter 1 presented the background of the research topic and proposed the needs for consumer research in transitional economies. The general research questions were also framed to investigate the most recent retail experience from the Polish consumers' point of view. Chapter 2 reviewed the relevant literature needed to address the proposed research questions by integrating a variety of sources including existing studies on consumers and retail environment in Poland, consumer behavior, and the retail literature. Chapter 3 describes the nature of the study by presenting the related literature on the development of research method and research design. In particular, the qualitative research and the data analysis strategy are described in detail.

## Development of Research Methodology

The selection and development of an appropriate research methodology depends upon the research questions posed. Investigation of an unknown group of consumers requires a qualitative approach. McCracken (1988) states that consumer research has been exposed to limited range of qualitative methods. Even with the development of the focus group methodology, the use of focus groups is generally associated with practice rather than theory. In the late 1980s, a broader range of qualitative methods were developed and applied in consumer behavior research (Belk, 1987; Hirschman, 1986; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1986; Holbrook, 1987; Sherry, 1987; Wallendorf, 1987). In addition, consumer researchers began to apply naturalistic techniques in cross-cultural contexts in an effort to understand behavior within a context.

Ethnographic methods are appropriate for apprehending a wide variety of consumer behavior phenomena (Miles, 1979). Arnould (1993) suggests that ethnography is useful in uncovering dynamics of interaction hidden by a script of “mindlessness” or “mindless reactive behavior” such as mundane shopping behavior and “ordinary” consumption. Ethnographic observation has the advantage of granting the researcher access to the world of everyday life: ethnographic observation watches behavior rather than asking people what (they think) they usually do, what (they think) they recently did, or what (they think) they will do. In addition, ethnographic methods employ unstructured questioning during participant observation and the unstructured interviews are designed to elicit material concerning shared cultural categories and meanings as the behavior unfolds.

In addition, the naturalistic approach (Belk, Sherry, & Wallendorf, 1988) used in qualitative research is appropriate for understanding and obtaining the “native point of view” (Davies & Schmidt, 1991). Belk et al. (1988) suggest that the use of the naturalistic inquiry paradigm in consumer research offers a number of advantages to the more traditional positivist methods. It provides the followings:

- Richer description of consumer behavior phenomena.
- Better opportunity for generating original theoretical insights grounded in naturally occurring behavior contexts.
- Greater openness to the insight of consumer themselves.
- Greater use of multiple methods of data collection and data analysis within one project.

In qualitative research, the investigator serves as a kind of “instrument” in the collection and analysis of data (McCracken, 1988, p. 18). This metaphor emphasizes that the investigator cannot fulfill qualitative research objectives without using a broad range of his or her own experience, imagination, and intellect in ways that are various and unpredictable (Miles, 1979, p. 597).

To as great a degree as possible, this researcher tried to be immersed in the local culture through participation in activities in which are similarly engaged in by Polish consumers. Due to the limited time (4 months) to engage in deep immersion in cultural context, a number of naturalistic techniques of data gathering were employed: observation, in-depth interview, and photography.

The difficulty in using qualitative methods is that respondents lead hectic, deeply segmented, and privacy-centered lives and are willing to give the investigator only limited time and attention. Time scarcity and concern for privacy stand as important impediments to the qualitative study of modern life. (McCracken, 1988).

## Prestructuring a Qualitative Study

One of the most important issues in designing a qualitative study can be the degree of prestructuring of the method (Maxwell, 1986). A structured approach can be used to ensure the comparability of data across sources and researchers. Thus, this approach is helpful in answering variance questions - questions that deal with differences between things, and their explanation. In contrast, an unstructured approach allows researchers to focus on the particular phenomenon studied; it trades generalizability for contextual understanding. However, Miles and Huberman (1994) warn that the lack of researcher's experience in conducting qualitative study may diminish the benefit of using a highly inductive, loose design.

Given that this study sought to investigate a particular phenomenon in a specific context, and given that the investigator had limited experience in conducting qualitative research, a semi-structured approach was used in this study. This approach permits a researcher to work around the barriers that are imposed by the characteristics of the study and by the limited experience of the investigator.

**Data Collection Techniques for Qualitative Study**

The most frequently used data collection method in a qualitative study is interviewing. An interview, as Dexter (1970) has suggested, is a conversation with a purpose. Interviews can be categorized by their degree of structure as either structured or unstructured (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The structured interview is the mode of choice when the interviewer knows what he or she does not know and can therefore frame appropriate questions to find it out, while an unstructured interview is the mode of choice when the interviewer does not know what she or he doesn't know and must therefore rely on the respondent to tell him or her.

For this study, the semi-structured in-depth interview was chosen for data collection. An in-depth interview involves a one-to-one dialogue between the researcher and the respondent using a list of guiding questions. This type of interview is often utilized to identify consumer attitudes, motives, and behavior, and to measure their relative importance.

In conducting qualitative research, the triangulation of interviews and observations is highly recommended because it can provide a more complete and accurate account than either one could alone. Triangulation is defined as a method collection information from a diverse range of individuals and settings using a variety of methods (Denzin, 1970). This procedure reduces the risk that the conclusions may reflect the systematic biases of a specific method, and it allows for a better assessment of the validity and generality of the results of the study.

Observation is mainly useful for obtaining descriptions of behavior and events, whereas interviewing is mainly useful for obtaining the perspectives of the participants. Observations are likely to take different forms at different stages of the inquiry. Early on, the observations may be very unstructured, a stage of defocusing or immersion (Douglas, 1975) in order to permit the observer to expand his or her tacit knowledge and to develop some sense of what is seminal or salient. Later, the observations may become more focused as insights and information grow. A major advantage of direct observation is that it provides here-and-now experience in depth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Issues in Conducting the Consumer Research in Foreign Country**

In conducting consumer behavior research in a foreign country, it is necessary to take an open-minded approach from the beginning. In other words, having any assumptions based on previous experiences or familiar knowledge on the subject matter would be inappropriate. For instance, even though the consumer satisfaction construct has been well defined and conceptualized, it is in a mainly North American context. Therefore, researchers should not assume that this construct is universal.

Construct measurement appears to be one of the major barriers when researchers attempt to conduct the cross-cultural consumer research. One of the more evident problems is the language barrier. Typically, in the case of using questionnaires, the translation and back-translation method is used to obtain the equivalence and a translator is used for the in-depth interviews or in a focus group setting. However, researchers need to take a special care in this process in order to achieve reliability of information.

## Selection of Research Site

In order to investigate the Polish consumers' recent retail experience, this study was conducted in one of the major cities in Poland, Krakow. One of the challenges that a researcher usually faces in conducting research in a different country is the lack of network and local support system. For this reason, Krakow was chosen to be the main research site because the availability of support from the Marketing Department at the Krakow University of Economics. This arrangement allowed the investigator to have access to the student population on campus as well as to interact with Poles on a daily bases to obtain much of information about the historical events involved in the political and economic transition in Poland.

Krakow is the third largest city in Poland and a popular tourist destination in Europe. The student population makes up ten percent of the city population of 180,000. Since the main research question was to investigate Polish consumers' recent retail experience it was important to have a research site that offered various types of retail outlets reflecting the current development in Poland. Krakow was an appropriate choice because it has a dynamic retail environment including both new and traditional formats:

foreign-owned retail outlets (e.g., hypermarkets, supermarkets, fashion specialty stores), foreign-owned Quick-Serve restaurants (e.g., McDonald's, KFC, Burger King), local specialty outlets, open air markets, and local department stores.

## Selection of Research Context

The retail context chosen for this study, shopping for groceries, met three criteria:

1) frequent event;
2) relatively free of gender and age bias; and
3) maximum impact on the consumers' retail experience.

Grocery shopping is considered to be one of the most frequent shopping activities as well as is almost free of gender and age bias in Poland. Under the planned economy, obtaining products was the responsibility of all family members. This pattern is still well kept since a high percentage of females work and some have more than one job.

Introduction of foreign-owned retail outlets, mainly hypermarkets and supermarkets, is considered to be the biggest change in the Polish retail environment. While the other retail formats, such as specialty stores, department stores, and wholesale membership clubs, are also gaining more popularity among Poles, hypermarkets and supermarkets already have made a significant impact on the behavior of the Polish consumer within the last few years.

## Development of Research Design

This section describes in detail how the research was conducted to investigate the Polish consumers' recent retail experience. Maxwell's (1986) interactive model was adopted for the study. Maxwell's interactive approach offers a model of research design that is based on the important components of research design: purposes, conceptual context, research questions, methods, and validity. All are integrated into one model and interact with each other. This model captures the essence of inductive process that is preferred by most researchers who use the qualitative approach. In addition, this interactive approach better captures the numerous changes and movements back and forth between the components that occur during the actual research process. Figure 3-1 presents the underlying structure and interconnection of the components of the study.

## Process of Conducting the Research

This section details the process that was followed in order to conduct the dissertation research. The following steps were employed in the research design:

- Recruiting participants
- Pilot study – focus group
- Training interpreters
- Conducting interviews/ participant observation
- Transcribing interviews
- Coding and analyzing the data
- Assessing the quality of data and interpretation

### Recruiting Participants

Sampling in qualitative research is non-probabilistic. Interviewees are not chosen for statistical reasons, but they are selected purposively. A "snowballing" technique was used to collect a sample with diversity in socio-demographic characteristics. Initially, the investigator approached the college students and administrative staff on campus to establish the initial contacts. Initial contact persons either agreed to be interviewed or introduced other potential participants (e.g., family members or friends) to the investigator. No compensation was offered for their participation in the study.

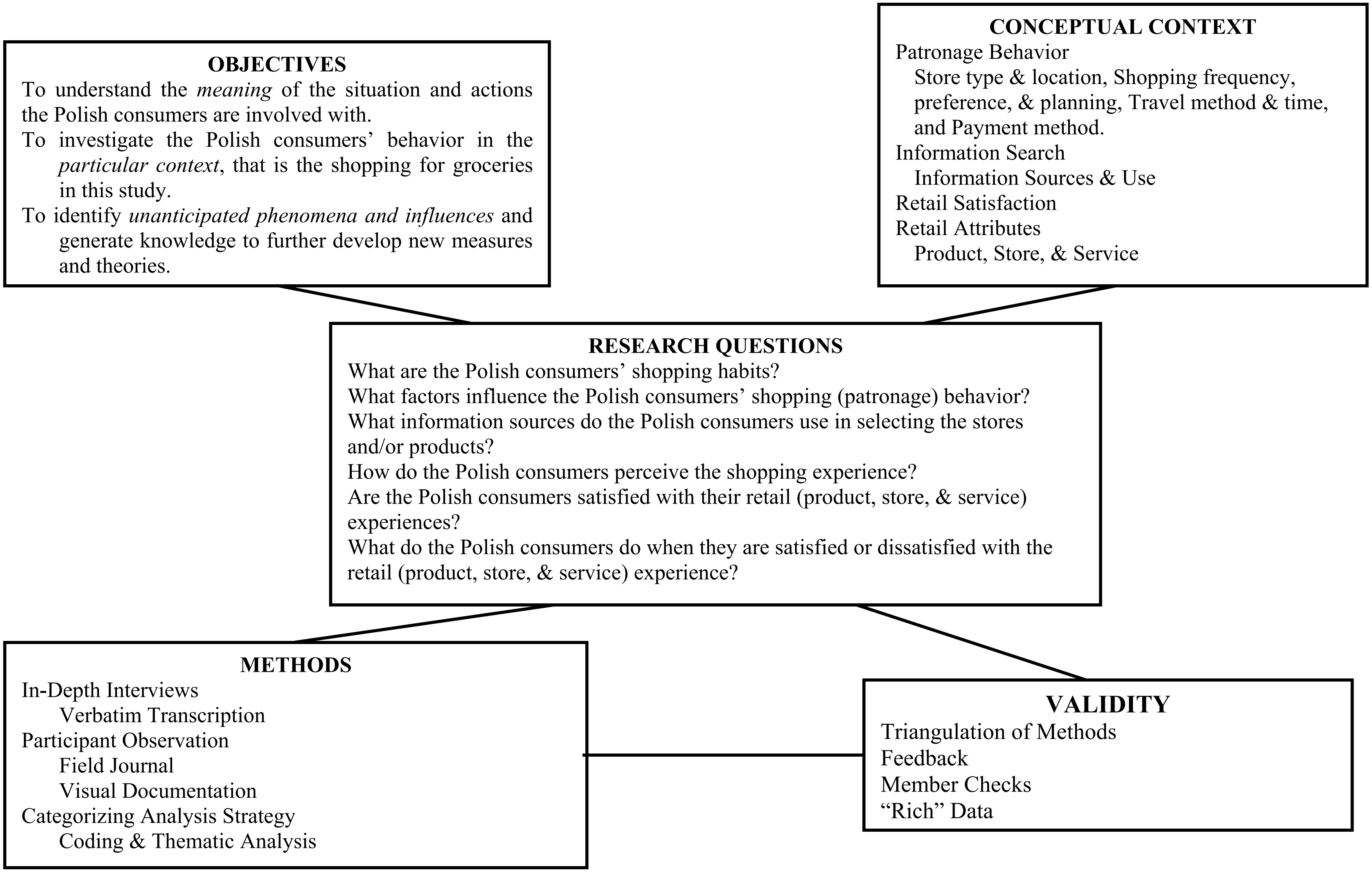



**Figure 3-1. Concept Map**

## Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted using a focus group format. The focus group was composed of three professors from the Marketing Department at the Krakow University of Economics. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the appropriateness of the guiding interview questions (Table. 3-2) and to determine whether these questions would work as intended in a Polish context. The guiding interview questions were developed using the proposed concept map as a guideline and the literature review on information search, shopping behavior, retail satisfaction, and consumer complaint behavior. The focus group technique was used to maximize the benefit of obtaining the feedback and to reduce the possibility of biased suggestions from the perspective of one person.

Overall, the participants did not have any problems answering the questions and reported that the order (flow) of questions asked was appropriate. However, participants pointed out that "money" is one of the taboo subjects in Poland. All three participants suggested replacing the question of the actual amount of income with the income tax bracket (e.g., 18% for the lowest category).

## Training Interpreters

Two of the three lecturers who participated in the pilot study were recruited to assist the investigator as the interpreters for the interviews. Two interpreters were well qualified for the work because they had a good understanding of the study by participating in the focus group for the pilot study. As well, they were experts in the field of marketing/retailing in Poland.

## Table 3-1. List of Guiding Interview Questions by Topics

**Patronage Behavior**

1. Where do you go to buy groceries (food stuffs, paper products, house products)?
2. Is this store the closest one from your house/flat?
3. How often do you shop for grocery?
4. When do you usually shop for grocery? During weekdays, weekend, or both? During daytime, after work, or late in the evening?
5. Do you make a list prior to go shopping?
6. Do you have a car?
7. How do you get to the store by walk, autobus, tram, or by car?
8. How long does it take to get to the store?
9. What kind of payment method (i.e., cash or credit card) do you use? If you prefer either method, is there any reason for your choice of method?

**Information Search Behavior**

10. Where do you get the information about stores/products?
11. (If the participants mention a particular source of advertisements, ask the following question) Do you actually use the information from the mentioned source at the time of shopping or planning of your shopping? Do you check the special promotions in the source of advertisement?
12. Do you get information from your friends or family about the products, promotions, and stores?
13. Do you also share (tell) the information about the products, promotions, and stores with your friends and family?

**Retail Attributes**

14. Why do you shop at the store mentioned earlier?
    1) Product (assortment, price, promotion, quality):
        a. Do they offer the best (lowest) price?
        b. Do they offer widest variety of products?
        c. Do you pay attention to the promotions in the store?
    2) Store (location, layout, visual merchandising, sample tasting stands)
        a. Is it easy to find the products you are looking for in the store?
        b. Is the price label clearly marked on the shelves?
        c. Are the products displayed nicely for you?
        d. What do you think about the sample tasting offers at the store? Do you enjoy them? (why or why not?) Have you purchased the item that you tried at the sample tasting?
    3) Service (friendlessness of associates, knowledge of associate on products, return policy, check-out lanes)
        a. Can you find the sales associate easily when you need help at the store?
        b. What kinds of help (regarding price, product information, and so on) do you usually need from the sales associates?
        c. Are the sales associates helpful and provide a good service?
        d. How is the checkout lane? Do you have to wait in the queue for long time? Do you think that cashiers are nice and efficient?
        e. Does the store have a convenient return policy?

**Post-purchase Behavior**

15. In general, are you satisfied with the store(s) you shop? Why or why not?
    1) Would you give me a specific example of satisfied or dissatisfied experience with the stores? (If the participants do not have any example, give them an hypothetical example of the case when they want to return a defected product and the store is not willing to either help them or giving them less than expected treatment. Then, ask them what they would do)
    2) How does the satisfaction/dissatisfaction experience make you feel?
    3) Did you go back to the same store for the next purchase?
    4) If yes, why?/ If no, why not?
16. Did you tell others about your satisfied or dissatisfied experience at the store?

After a copy of guiding questions was given to the interpreters, the investigator met with them twice to discuss the concerns that may arise due to the difficulty of accurate translation. The scope of discussion at these meetings was not limited to the guiding questions since the interviewing method was designed to be flexible and spontaneous using the naturalistic approach in the study. Although most of interviews were conducted in English by the investigator, one of the interpreters was present in all interviews to assist with situations that might occur due to language differences.

**Conducting Interviews**

Semi-structured, open interviews were conducted with individual consumers. All interviews were conducted by the investigator. The interviews were conducted at a location convenient to each participant. The interviews followed loosely the guiding questions and were audio-taped with permission of the participant and transcribed verbatim. The interviewer explained to the participants that the tape recorder was being used solely for note taking and enabling the interviewer to focus on what was being said. The interviewer also explained that the recording would be used solely for analysis purposes and individual names would not be linked with interview transcripts or audiotapes. Although participants were assured of confidentiality, the investigator also provided subjects with written documentation (via an informed consent form) that included the assurance of confidentiality and the contact information for should they have any questions or comments regarding the research.

The sample consisted of 24 interviews (including pilot study) conducted with Polish consumers in Krakow, Poland. Participants in the study were urban, highly educated, middle class consumers. Though the sample size was small by traditional quantitative sampling standards, qualitative researchers assert that in purposeful sampling the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. For qualitative research, McCracken (1988) suggests anywhere between eight and twenty interviews. The exact number needed depends primarily upon the concept of information redundancy (i.e., saturation). Sampling is generally terminated when no new information is obtained from newly sampled respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Key characteristics of the sample were identified as follow. First, the participants were urban residents living within the city limits of Krakow. Second, the participants ranged in age from 20 to mid-50s, the income level was broadly distributed but the older participants reported higher incomes than younger participants did. Third, the participants' education level was high, with the majority having completed graduate school. Fourth, the participants were in charge of shopping for groceries for families. Finally, the participants shopped for groceries daily at the neighborhood stores as well as regularly (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly, monthly) at the supermarkets or hypermarkets.

**Conducting Participant Observation as the Mean of Triangulation**

The methodology of participant observation was used to improve the validity of the data obtained from the interviews. It requires that the researcher become directly involved as a participant in people's daily lives. Participant observation is a very special strategy and method for gaining access to the interior, subjective aspects of human existence (Jorgensen, 1989). Through participation, the researcher is able to observe and experience the meanings and interactions of people from the role of an insider. In order to observe Polish consumers in the context of shopping, grocery shopping to be specific, the investigator engaged in the shopping activity in the locations (e.g., neighborhood stores, hypermarkets) that were visited by Polish consumers.

To achieve the closest "social location" as well as "physical location" with Polish consumers, the investigator arranged a home-stay with a Polish family during four months of her stay in Krakow, Poland. This arrangement allowed the investigator to imitate the Polish consumers' daily activities such as using public transportation, daily grocery shopping, and weekend grocery shopping.

Participants were asked about their sampling experience at the large store format. This question was added to the original set of guiding questions as a result of the investigator's observation from shopping at a large store (TESCO) regularly. Sampling was mostly presented by a young female staff member around the packaged food section in the store. In order to gain better understanding, investigator witnessed and participated in samplings of Jacob coffee, Pillsbury pierogi, and Danone yougurt at TESCO.

The level of involvement in terms of "gone native" or "becoming phenomenon" (Adler & Adler, 1987) that could have been achieved as a participant was restricted due to mostly the physical difference (investigator is of Asian origin). However, it was possible to build close relationships with a few Poles who felt comfortable with the investigator. Reducing the gap (e.g., location, social, psychological) between people at the research site and the investigator appeared to be a crucial process in being able to observe what people normally say and do. In order to record the experience of the observation, memos and photos were taken and artifacts (e.g., leaflets) were collected to capture the market environment.

## Analysis Strategy

The process of data analysis is essentially a synthetic one, in which the constructions that have emerged inquire source interactions are reconstructed into meaningful wholes. Thus, it is not a matter of data reduction, but of induction. Inductive analysis begins not with theories or hypotheses but with the data themselves, from which theoretical categories and relational propositions may be arrived at by an inductive reasoning process. Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that coding of incidents may be done in any way that suits the investigator; they specifically mention marginal notes or entries on index cards.

The ultimate goal of the analysis was to identify the emergent themes by carefully examining the collected data, interview transcripts, field journals, and visual documents. Analysis was conducted by carrying out the following four steps:

- verbatim transcription of interviews
- reading and viewing transcriptions, field Journals, and visual documents
- open-coding analysis
- thematic analysis: identify emergent themes

### Verbatim Transcription of Interviews

Upon completion of all interviews, they were transcribed by the investigator. The goal for transcription was to provide a verbatim transcript of the interview. In the case of the interview where a translator was used for the entire interview, only the part translated into English was transcribed. The length of transcription ranged from 10 to 20 pages each, double spaced. The verbatim transcription approach was used to improve the quality of the data. One of the methods to assess the quality of the data is to use "Rich Data" or the verbatim transcription of the interview.

### Reading and Viewing Transcriptions, Field Journals, and Visual Documents

The transcriptions and field journals were read multiple times during the data immersion process. In addition, visual documents (i.e., photos, and artifacts) were examined during this time. In order to move onto the next step of data analysis, an open-coding analysis, it is crucial to be thoroughly familiarized with the data (i.e., transcriptions, field journals, and visual documents). While this step of analysis may not be so important for the quantitative approach, it is one of the most significant steps for qualitative data analysis. The more time spent understanding the data at this stage, the more meaningful the categories, issues, and/or patterns became.

There are two major views about when the analysis should take place, immediately after finishing the first interview or observation or after completing all of the interviews. The experienced qualitative researcher begins data analysis immediately after finishing the first interview or observation and continues to analyze the data as long as he or she is working on research. An alternative view can be suggested to wait until completing all of the interviews before beginning analysis in order to avoid having earlier interviews that may bias the later ones. Later approach was used in this study because the research questions were semi-structured (well-formulated in advance), the interviews were tape-recorded, and the comparability of interview material was important. (Maxwell, 1986, p. 77). In addition, the interviews were conducted in a period of three weeks and no more than one or two days apart from each other. The contents of the previous interviews were fresh in the investigator's mind throughout the interviewing process which was helpful in identifying the moment of "theory saturation".

The analysis strategy involves three major steps: open coding analysis, theme analysis, and relation analysis. First, the open coding was conducted by categorizing the data as reading through each transcript. For instance, the category of "basket of products" was used to code the participant's comments on purchasing the different product mix at the different types of store. Due to the nature of the semi-structured interview method, however, not all categories emerged directly from the data. Some of the categories (i.e., duration of shopping, store location) used to code the data came directly from the interview questions. For example, "payment method" was used to code the comments to the question of "How do you pay for your purchase?"

Second, thematic analysis was conducted by reviewing each category in-depth and by investigating the relationships within as well as between categories. A number of themes emerged from this process. The emergent themes were presented with an intention of giving cohesiveness among categories. While open coding was a truly deductive process to break down the data in pieces, thematic analysis was the process that identified the repeated patterns (saturation) in the data. A total of sixteen themes emerged from the data and each themes were discussed in detail. Finally, relation analysis takes a macro approach to explain the existing as well as the potential relationships amongst the categories that were identified during the open coding analysis. The results of relation analysis are presented in Chapter 5.

**Open-coding Analysis**

Open-coding analysis was conducted followed by the data immersion stage. Open coding is defined as the process by which the patterns and issues are identified and rearranged into categories. This step involved a qualitative investigation of the individual transcripts as that text units within each individual transcript could be inductively coded into specific coding categories.

The objective of this step was to look for repeated patterns of happenings, events, or actions/interactions that represent what people do or say, alone or together, in response to the problems and situations in which they find themselves (Strauss & Cobin, 1998, p. 123-142). While the previous stage may be considered as a "garden wandering period", looking for the flowers, open coding stage can be described as a "flower picking period".

Open coding analysis was conducted followed by the data immersion process, which was carried out by reading each interview transcript several times. This process helped the investigator to detect the major trends from the entire data set that provided some guidelines of how to organize the open-coding analysis. Due to the semi-structured nature of the interview most of the categories were pre-determined, others emerged from the unanticipated responses. For instance, store choice, travel method, duration of shopping, and payment method are pre-determined categories while basket of products, shopping preference and in-store shopping habits are the examples of an emergent category.

After a number of trials using different analysis strategies, a template was created to record the results of the deductive process of the open-coding analysis. Since participants identified their choice of stores (retail formats) for grocery shopping at the beginning of the interview, the rest of the interview was focused on their perceptions of and experience with these stores. By using the template, the results of the coding analysis were organized by separating the comments on general retail experience from the comments on specific retail formats (e.g., small store, large store, open-air market, kiosk/street vendor).

### Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was carried out to move beyond the categorization of data and to identify and discuss the emergent themes. Thematic analysis focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of living and/or behavior. Themes that emerge from the transcriptions are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture. Each category that emerged in the previous stage was examined with care for in-depth discussion. A total of sixteen themes emerged and the discussion of each emergent theme is presented in Chapter 4.

## Assessing the Quality of the Data and Interpretations

The research design and methodology described in this chapter were developed in order to provide data that are trustworthy and appropriate for investigating unknown consumers. This section outlines the criteria that were used to assess the overall quality of the data.

Qualitative researchers argue that conventional validity and reliability issues are not applicable to qualitative research. Brinberg and McGrath (1985, p. 13) states that, "Validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with techniques". Instead, it depends on the relationship of your conclusions to the real world, and there are no methods that can assure you that you have adequately grasped those aspects of the world that you are studying. So, instead of traditional validity and reliability, Maxwell (1986) provides three types of validity in conducting qualitative research: description, interpretation, and theory. The main threat to valid description is inaccuracy or incompleteness of the data. The audio or video recording of observations and interviews, and verbatim transcription of these recordings, largely resolves this problem. Research should always record and transcribe interviews unless there is a strong reason not to. For observation, the detailed and chronological observation notes need to be made unless there is a video recording of the observation. The main treat to valid interpretation is imposing one's own framework or meaning, rather than understanding the perspective of people studied and the meanings they attach to their words and actions. The most important check on such validity threats is to seriously and systematically attempt to learn how the participants in the study make sense of what's going on, rather than pigeonholing their words and actions in his own framework. The strategy, known as *member check,* is one of the main ways of avoiding this threat. The most serious threat to the theoretical validity of an account is not collecting or paying attention to discrepant data, or not considering alternative explanations or understandings of the phenomenon being studied.

Maxwell (1986) argues that it is essential to rule out validity threats in order to increase the credibility of the data and conclusions. Two broad types of threats to validity are often raised in relation to qualitative studies: researcher bias, and the effect of the research on the setting or individuals studied, known as reactivity. Qualitative research is not primarily concerned with eliminating variance between researchers in the values and expectations they bring to study, but with understanding how a particular researcher's values influence the conduct and conclusions of the study (Maxwell, 1986). It is impossible to eliminate the actual influence of the researcher, so the goal in a qualitative study is to understand it and to use it productively.

Maxwell (1986) presents a number of techniques that help to rule out validity threats and increase the credibility of data and analysis: the Modus Operandi approach; discrepant and negative cases; triangulation; feedback; member checks; "Rich" data; quasi-statistics; and comparison. For this study, three techniques were implemented to fulfill the validity criteria: triangulation; "Rich" data; and member checks.

*Triangulation.* Triangulation is defined as a method that collects information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods (Denzin, 1970). This reduces the risk that the conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific method, and it allows researcher to gain a better assessment of the validity and generality of the explanations developed. Triangulation of observations and interviews can provide a more complete and accurate picture than either could alone.

One belief that inhibits triangulation is the widespread assumption that observation is mainly useful for obtaining descriptions of behavior and events, whereas interviewing is mainly useful for obtaining the perspectives of informants. Observation often enables a researcher to draw inferences about someone's meaning and perspective that couldn't be obtained by relying exclusively on interview data. Conversely, interviewing can be a valuable way (the only way, for events that took place in the past or ones to which you cannot gain observational access) of gaining a description of actions and events. However, in order for interviewing to be useful for this purpose, the researcher needs to ask about specific events and actions, rather than posing questions that elicit only generalizations or abstract opinions (Weiss, 1994, p. 72-76).

*"Rich" data.* In interview studies, verbatim transcripts of the interviews are required and not just simple notes on what was noticed or was felt at the time to be significant. For observation, rich data are the product of detailed, descriptive note taking about the specific, concrete events that one observes. For this study all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Field notes were taken to record comprehensive experiences and observations in the field.

*Member checks.* A member check involves providing all or a portion of a final report to people who have served as participants on the project, that is, who are the members of the sample. This is systematically soliciting feedback about the data and the conclusions from the people being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpretation of the meanings of what was said and the perspective they have on what is going on. It is important not to assume that the participants' pronouncements are necessarily valid. Their responses should be taken simply as evidence regarding the validity of ones account. Two participants were asked to comment on findings of this study and both of them agreed to participate in this process. A draft copy of Chapter 4 was sent to each participant via e-mail. Participants were asked to comment on findings in terms of the accuracy and relevance and send it back to investigator via e-mail. Both participants supported the emergent themes and its supporting data (i.e., excerpts).

# CHAPTER 4
# ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

## Introduction

This chapter reviews the results of the analysis undertaken to categorize the data and to identify the emergent themes. The chapter begins with a demographic profile of the participants. Then, the results of open coding analysis and thematic analysis are presented. The findings are organized using the conceptual context proposed in Chapter 2. The conceptual context includes the four major topics: information search behavior; patronage behavior; retail attributes; and post-purchase behavior. A total of sixteen emergent themes are presented under the four topics. In addition, selected excerpts from the transcripts are presented to support the findings.

## Sample Demographics

Socio-demographic information was collected at the end of each interview. Table 4-1 details the demographic information including gender, age, education, occupation and marital status of each participant. Three quarters of the participants (18 female and 6 male) were the female members of the household in charge of grocery shopping. Although not all male participants were responsible for grocery shopping in their household, they joined the primary shopper frequently on trips to the grocery stores and were able to describe the grocery shopping activities. Grocery shopping is not considered to be a gender specific activity in Poland, although female members of the households tend to be more involved in this activity than male members. In addition, the gender of investigator being female and the participants' willingness to talk about grocery shopping may have influenced the gender composition of the data set.

Participants ranged in age from 20 years old to the mid 50s. Most of the participants in their 20s were single (with the exception of 2 females) and lived alone or with a roommate(s). Only one participant in her 40s had a large family with four children. This participant indicated that having four children is very unusual in Polish society. Two participants in their 50s both had one grown-up child living in their home. Only one participant, in her 50s, was divorced.

The participants were highly educated; four of them had doctorate degrees, eleven of them had some sort of graduate degrees, and the rest of them had bachelor's degree or were currently enrolled in college. Reflecting their high level of education, most of participants had professional occupations such as professor, lecturer, librarian, teacher, travel agent, and office administrator. Only two participants did not work outside of the home: one participant in her 50s recently retired and the other one in her early 30s was a housewife with a young child.

Following the suggestions from the pilot study (participant #1, #2, and #3), income tax bracket was used to obtain the income level of participants (18% is the lowest bracket and 33% is the highest bracket) unless the participant was willing to disclose the specific amount of income. The income of married participants may include the spouse's income. In general, the married and older participants had a higher income level than those who were single and in their 20s.

**Table 4-1. Demographics of the Samples**

| No | Gender | Age | Income | Education | Occupation | Marital Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Female | 40s | 18% tax | PhD | Instructor, University | Single |
| 2 | Male | 31 | 18% tax | MA | Instructor, University | Single |
| 3 | Male | 33 | 18% tax | MA | Instructor, University | Single |
| 4 | Female | 26 | 18% tax | BA | Travel Agent | Single |
| 5 | Female | 28 | 33% tax | MBA | Travel Agent, British Airway | Single |
| 6 | Female | 25 | 800zl per month | MS | Assistant Manager, University | Single |
| 7 | Female | 29 | 800zl per month + | BA | Assistant Manager, University | Married wo/ child |
| 8 | Female | 50s | 33% tax | PhD | Professor | Married w/ 1 grown-up child |
| 9 | Female | 50s | 33% tax | MS | House wife | Married w/ 1 grown-up child |
| 10 | Female | 40s | 2000 zl per month | MA | Librarian, University | Single |
| 11 | Female | 40s | 2500 zl per month | MA | Instructor, University | Single |
| 12 | Female | 24 | 1300zl per month | BA | Office Manager, Part-time Student | Single |
| 13 | Female | 20 | 18% tax | HS | College Student | Single |
| 14 | Female | 29 | 2000 zl per month | MA | Teacher, High school | Single |
| 15 | Male | 23 | 18% tax | HS | College Student | Single |
| 16 | Male | 26 | 18% tax | HS | College Student | Single |
| 17 | Male | 33 | 18% tax | BA | Aikido Instructor | Single |
| 18 | Female | 32 | 18% tax | BA | Between Jobs | Single |
| 19 | Female | 50s | 33% tax | MA | Instructor, University | Married |
| 20 | Female | 30s | 5000 zl | PhD | Professor | Married wo/ child |
| 21 | Female | 50s | 18% tax | PhD | Travel Guide | Divorced |
| 22 | Female | 34 | 18% tax | HS | House wife, Part-time student | Married w/ 1 child |
| 23 | Female | 46 | 33% tax | MA | Part-time teacher, Technical School | Married w/ 4 children |
| 24 | Male | 46 | 33% tax | MS | Engineer | Married w/ 2 children |

## Findings

In this section, the results of thematic analysis are presented. The findings are organized by the conceptual context in Chapter 2, of which consists four major topics: information search behavior; patronage behavior; retail attributes; and post-purchase behavior. Using a deductive approach, the thematic analysis was conducted to extract the storylines based on the repeated patterns that were observed in the results of open coding analysis.

A total of 23 categories were used for the open code analysis and sixteen themes emerged from the thematic analysis process. Table 4-2 presents a summary of the categories and the emergent themes. In the section on *information search behavior*, five emergent themes are presented: 1) existence of various information sources; 2) limited pre-store search for grocery shopping; 3) various in-store information search behaviors; 4) influential factors on external information search behavior: price, product category, and product knowledge; and 5) lack of trustworthiness toward information sources. Four themes emerged that depict the participants' *patronage behavior* in context of grocery shopping experience: 1) combination of daily and weekly grocery shopping; 2) distinctive basket of products for each retail format; 3) impulsive purchasing behavior at the large stores; and 4) unwillingness to change in patronage behavior. In the section on *retail attributes*, three emergent themes are presented: 1) multi-dimensional convenient orientation: proximity versus one-stop shopping; 2) trade off approach: between product related attributes and service related attributes; and 3) influence of store related attributes on purchasing decision. Finally, under the topic of *post-purchase behavior*, three emergent themes are presented: 1) low expectation and high satisfaction; 2) passive

**Table 4-2. Summary of Categories and Emergent Themes by Topics**

| Topic | Category | Theme |
|---|---|---|
| Information Search Behavior | Information Sources<br>Information Seeking<br>Information Use | • Existence of various information sources<br>• Limited pre-store search for grocery shopping<br>• Various in-store information search behavior<br>• Influential factors to external information search behavior: price, product Category, and product knowledge<br>• Lack of trustworthiness toward information sources |
| Patronage Behavior | Store choice<br>Basket of products<br>Store location<br>Travel method<br>Travel time<br>Duration of shopping<br>Shopping frequency<br>Shopping preference: likes/ dislikes<br>Payment method<br>In-store shopping habit | • Combination of daily and weekly grocery shopping<br>• Distinctive basket of products for each retail format<br>• Impulsive purchasing behavior at the large stores<br>• Unwillingness to change in patronage behavior |
| Retail Attributes | Product related<br>Store related<br>Service related | • Multi-dimensional convenient orientation: proximity versus one-stop shopping<br>• Trade off approach between product related attributes and service related attributes<br>• Importance of store related attributes on purchasing decision |
| Post-purchase Behavior | Overall retail satisfaction<br>Complaint behavior: actual experience/ hypothetical situation<br>Re-patronize intention<br>Word-of-mouth | • Low expectation and high satisfaction<br>• Passive "Voice" action versus aggressive "Word-of-Mouth"<br>• Limited store switching behavior |
| Others | Time perception | • Influence of time perception in patronage behavior |

"Voicing" action versus aggressive "Word-of-Mouth"; and 3) limited store switching behavior. Finally, one global theme emerged which relates to all four topics, that is influence of time perception on the overall retail experience.

## Findings from the *Information Search Behavior* Responses

### Theme #1: Existence of Various Information Sources

It is evident that participants are exposed to a variety of information sources on a daily basis. The most frequently mentioned information sources were billboards, leaflets, and in-store promotion including promotion display and sampling. In general, participants indicated they use both personal and impersonal sources when they search for information on products. For personal information sources, family members, friends, and sales staff were mentioned and for impersonal sources, multi-media including TV, radio, billboard, leaflet, newspaper, and in-store promotions were mentioned.

At the time of conducting the research, TESCO, a U.K grocery retailer, opened its first store in Krakow and a couple of participants talked about how they found out about the grand opening of TESCO.

> *8-11: I found out about TESCO from a big billboard around my neighborhood.*
>
> *23-27: I heard about the big promotion all over Krakow that it was going to open soon.*

The use of billboards seems to be the most effective way of spreading words in Krakow since they are located throughout the city including around the train station, tram stops, on the fences, and on the exterior of buildings. According to the investigator's observation, two major hypermarkets (e.g., Carrefour, Tesco) used the billboards to advertise their promotional products at the prime locations in the city where the foot traffic is extremely high, such as the tram and bus stops near the city center and close by the residential area. The use of billboards in the city can be seen in the examples presented in Figure 4-1 and 4-2. Figure 4-1 shows the billboards placed around one of the major tram stations in the city. Figure 4-2 shows the billboards placed on one side of the building located across the Philharmonic Music Hall in Krakow. Billboards are used by different business entities such as hypermarkets, specialty stores (e.g., DIY, furniture), alcohol brands, and movies.

Leaflets were also used heavily by the hypermarkets and supermarkets to promote the products and stores. The leaflets were either delivered to homes around the store location or available at the entrance of the stores. By examining the leaflets, a number of


**Figure 4-1. An example of billboard presentation in Krakow: Tram station**

**Figure 4-2. An example of billboard presentation in Krakow: Downtown**

observations can be made in terms of how retailers communicate with their target customers and what sort of products and services are offered. For example, Figure 4-3 shows a leaflet that was sent to the home of one participant from TESCO, a hypermarket.

Figure 4-3a shows the items of the week (e.g., artificial flowers and candles) and the period of the promotion at the left hand corner (i.e., from October 11 to October 24). These items were selected for the week due to the anticipation of demands for the upcoming All Saints Day. It is one of the widely observed religious days in Poland and Poles bring flowers and candles to the cemetery in the evening. Figure 4-3b and 4-3c present a wide variety of product categories (i.e., from foodstuffs to electronics) offered at the store. Several imported products (e.g., Merci, Marinda, Sony) are shown in the leaflet as well. Interestingly, no consistent price ending was used in pricing (i.e., -.00, -.39, -.49, -.59, -.64, -.65, -.79, -.89, -.90, and -.99). Finally, Figure 4-3d shows the last page of the leaflet which consists of a number of information items about the store, such as gift certificates, other store locations in Poland, accepted payment methods, and the shuttle bus schedule.

**Theme #2: Limited Pre-store Search for Grocery Shopping**

Despite the volume of information available to consumers, participants indicated very limited use of information in their shopping activity. Most participants regularly received the leaflets at home from at least one supermarket or hypermarket. While some said that they did not even look through the information in the leaflet, others said that they enjoy receiving the leaflet. However, whether they actually used the information or not was questionable for the latter case. There was no indication that the information obtained from the leaflet was used to make purchase decisions. Most participants said that the information on the leaflet did not influence their purchasing decision. It was the same finding regarding sampling in the store. Most participants indicated they were not convinced to purchase the new product after participating in the sampling. According to the participants' comments on how they made purchasing decisions on grocery items, participants heavily relied on their internal information source, such as norms, habits, and previous experience in making purchase decisions on grocery items.

> *9-14: I'm generally quite resistant to the promotions. Watching for promotions takes too much time…Tasting a very small amount of yogurt or cheese doesn't convince me to buy the product.*
>
> *20-19: Even if I look through it, it doesn't mean that I use the information from it.*
>
> *22-21: I tried yogurt and ham in Carrefour. I tried it because they were new products but I wasn't interested in buying the products after sampling.*

Considering the fact that Polish consumers used to have very limited experience with external information sources, mainly media advertising, it is not surprising to see a limited use of the information available for their grocery shopping. According to a participant's testimony, very close attention was paid to all of the information sources that were available to her a few years ago when the western style stores were introduced to the Polish society. For instance, she collected the leaflets from all of the supermarkets and hypermarkets and compared the product offerings and prices. However, she quickly realized that it was too time consuming and the cost of searching for the best deal was too high for the marginal benefit that she might gain. Thus, she discontinued the extensive


A. Leaflet: Cover


B. Leaflet: Electronics


C. Leaflet: Food Stuffs


D. Leaflet: Back

**Figure 4-3. An Example of Leaflet**

search prior to the grocery shopping trip. Most of the participants said that they threw away the leaflets that are delivered to their home.

A few participants also expressed that lack of time was one of the reasons for not searching for information, whether looking through the leaflets at home or checking out the merchandise displays for promotional products in the store. Most of the participants expressed that they do not have enough time for grocery shopping. Therefore, their goal is to complete the shopping within the least amount of time, which prevents them from looking around the store for other products than what they originally planned to purchase. Those who do not read the leaflets indicated that either they have no time to review the material or they are not interested in finding out about the promotions. Most of the participants said that they do not make a list of things to buy before the trip to the grocery store. Thus, viewing information on what products are on sale becomes irrelevant to them. Even those who plan for their grocery shopping, it is about what they need for the week not about what they may need in the future. In other words, no one showed interest or a tendency to stock-up on the product based on the promotion.

> *9-14: I'm generally quite resistant to the promotions. Watching for promotions takes too much time.*
>
> *16-11: My mom used to collect leaflets from all of these stores and compared the promotions and went to the store offered the best price. Nowadays she considers it very time consuming so she goes to one store and buys everything and doesn't care about those tiny little differences any longer.*

**Theme #3: Various In-store Information Search Behavior**

Most of participants said that they pay more attention to the promotions in the store than leaflets or billboards for products. Few participants said that they made unplanned purchases because of the in-store promotional display. For instance, one participant said that she purchased the shampoo and conditioner because of the special deal of “buy one and get one free”. However, most participants indicated they do not search out the promotional products in the store. They find it to be a time consuming activity and they tend to avoid it all together.

> *16-21: I pay attention to these things (promotions in the store).*
>
> *22-26: One time I bought shampoo and conditioner because they were running a promotion, get both for the price of shampoo. It wasn’t my favorite brand either. But I bought them because of the promotion.*
>
> *20-22: I don’t look for promotions. I don’t have time for this.*

Interestingly, participants expressed mixed feelings about this type of information source. Some of them were in favor of participating in sampling and considered the opportunity be a good chance to try out new products. However, others were not willing to participate in sampling or they had doubts about the products used in sampling. Those who weren’t willing to participate in sampling described themselves as “shy” people. They found this type of activity in the store to be strange and awkward.

Some participants also mentioned that they conduct on-going search with no particular products in mind. Some of them simply enjoyed learning about new products and others consider shopping with their friends to be a fun activity. This behavior was more evident among younger participants in their 20s than those in their 50s.

**Theme #4: Influential Factors to External Information Search Behavior: Price, Product Category, and Product Knowledge**

While participants appear to engage in limited information search prior to making a purchase decision, price, product category, previous product knowledge, and end-user of the product seem to have some impact on their information seeking behavior. Participants indicated that they put no effort in seeking information for grocery products, which are considered to be inexpensive. They, however, showed a tendency to seek information from external sources for expensive items such as a TV, computer, home appliances and high involvement products such as cosmetics and apparel. For instance, one participant visited a number of electronic specialty shops to gather product information from salespersons as well as to try out the products.

For the high involvement products, a few participants said that they usually seek opinions and experiences of others (e.g., salesperson, friends, family members) before making the final purchase decision. A few female participants said that they prefer to accompany a male member of the family (e.g. husband or brother) or a male friend when they shop for the products about which they have very limited product knowledge, such as electronics and computer related products. A couple of male participants, in their 20s, mentioned that they tend to expand the search activity when they have to make a purchasing decision on a product for the family. They are often given the responsibility of selecting the electronics and computer related products for the family since the family members perceive them to be most familiar with high-tech related products.

> *15-24: Sometimes. When I'm looking for an expensive product such as TV and I look through advertising and compare prices.*

*23-32: If we'd like to buy something more serious then we go there and we also check with 2 or 3 shops.*

*23-34: We also ask for the suggestions about price and quality (to friends and relatives) but I also go to the shops to look at the quality and ask people there.*

*20-23: If it is about some serious shopping like clothes or shoes sometime I talk about it with my friends but not about groceries.*

*1-9: When I'm not an expert on the product that I need to purchase, I desperately need to get help from sales staff.*

*20-10: If it's about electronics, I rarely make a decision independently. I have no problem buying things like a coffee machine by my own. But for instance, if it is TV set or VCR, it is better to go with a man who knows better than I do. It can be my husband or someone who knows the technical things. It works the same for flat hunting. It's better to go shopping with someone who can give you advice.*

*16-16: I need to have a very broad perspective to make all family members happy. For example, I go to few shops and see and try out the products. I check out the price and then see if any other stores offer better prices and so on….I also try to make them involve in the decision-making process.*

In contrast to the search behavior for food products, participants appear to look for external information sources when they have more time to shop or to plan for shopping. Then they tend to seek external information sources, such as asking opinions from friends or checking out the products at the store. A few participants indicated that they seek out information from their friends and sales staff when they need to purchase a "big ticket" item such as electronic products, home appliances, and computer related products. For instance, one participant said that he would visit two to three stores to collect product and price information through testing the products and asking sales staff questions about the product.

Product category also appears to influence the information search behavior of Polish consumers. Product category seems to affect their information search mode. While there was some resistance to participate in sampling the new products for foodstuffs, the same participant showed willingness to try new products for health and beauty products. The importance of the product to the individual also seems to influence the willingness to try new products. Participants indicated that they mainly rely on an internal search (e.g., personal experience, and intuition) for high involvement products (e.g., cosmetics). Participants indicated that they do not usually seek advice or help when they need to make a decision about a simple purchase, such as grocery goods. Participants indicated that the two reasons for seeking out information are the price of the product (e.g., big-ticket items) and high involvement with the product (e.g., clothes). Interestingly, participants appear to rely heavily on their personal experience as the main information source for food products. They showed significant resistance toward the new food products. A number of comments were made by participants regarding their unwillingness to participate in sampling for food products at the store. Food is, indeed, an important part of Polish culture and participants indicated that it is not easy to convince them to try new food products. Even with fresh produce products, they tend to favor home grown products over imported products.

**Theme #5: Lack of Trustworthiness toward Information Sources**

Participants showed mix feelings about the Western way of promoting new products. While only a couple of participants indicated that they enjoy the sample tasting event for foodstuffs (e.g., coffee, yogurt, bread, cheese) others said that they do not like taking part in the sample tasting. Interestingly, several participants shared the same reason for having a negative attitude toward the sampling event. Some participants were simply suspicious of retailers using bad quality products for free sampling. One participant gave her shy personality as a reason for the limited participation of sampling.

Some participants were also doubtful of promotional products in terms of the quality. Overall, those who indicated no use of advertising information seem to have very little trust toward the retailers and their practices. Considering the relationship between retailers and customers in the past under the communist era, the doubtful attitude toward retailers concerning the quality and the conditions of products in promotion is understandable.

> *9-23: I do not pay that much attention to the leaflets. Sometimes I look through the leaflet and find a very low price on some products but I doubt that the quality of product may be good or if they are foodstuffs that they are close to the expiration date*

Few participants were doubtful of the quality of products used in the sampling, especially about food products. This perception seems to influence the choice of product categories that participants are willing to participate in sampling. For instance, those who doubted the quality of products used in sampling indicated that they would try the sample of non-food products, such as shampoo, conditioner, and cosmetics.

> *15-38: I've tried (samples for) sweets but in case of the processed meat, I wouldn't try it.*

> *22-29: As far as food is concerned, I'm rather a loyal customer so I buy the same brand most of the time. However, for cosmetics I like to experiment and try new things.*

## Findings from *Patronage Behavior* Responses

### Theme #1: Combination of daily and weekly shopping activity

After the introduction of the Western style retail outlets (e.g., supermarket, hypermarket), participants changed their grocery shopping habit from daily shopping at the small specialty stores around the neighborhood to combining daily and weekly shopping activities. Most of the participants indicated that they shop in at least two different types of retail formats for groceries. Generally speaking, they combined the daily shopping at a small store in their neighborhood or nearby their workplaces and the weekly or monthly shopping at a large store, such as a supermarket, hypermarket, or wholesale club. A few participants also indicated the use of an open-air market for their daily or weekly shopping. Three retail formats are identified in the data: small stores, large stores, and others including open-air market and kiosks. Findings regarding patronage behavior within each retail format are presented next.

#### *Small Stores*

Shopping done in small stores became a habit of their daily lives rather than an outcome of conscious efforts. Small stores are usually located close to either to participant's residence or workplace and it takes 3 to 5 minutes to walk. The proximity of the small stores seems to be the important factor for the store selection criteria. Most of the participants (except for two female participants) had a job and they shopped at the small stores on the way home from work and thus, they usually go to the small stores alone.

*1-2: I go to the small shop around my flat.*

*2-7: There are about 5 neighborhood stores but I shop at one store because it is the closest to my flat.*

*8-13: …small stores around my office.*

*23-2: if I don't have much time I usually go to local shops in the neighborhood.*

*11-13: It takes about 3 to 5 minutes to walk.*

*7-2: The most needed thing like bread I like to buy on my way home from work.*

*20-5: If I get off work early, around 6 or 7 o'clock, then I will stop at the store to get few things. The stores close at 8 o'clock.*
*9-8: I go shopping alone at the small local shops.*

Figures 4-4a and 4-4b show an example of a neighborhood store in Krakow. This store is located around the area where the investigator resided during this study. There were three stores for grocery stuffs around this area including a kiosk outlet. Figure 4-4a shows the building in which the neighborhood store is located. This store carried only grocery products such as foodstuffs and house cleaning chemicals. The liquor store was located next to this store and shared the same entrance. The other end of the building was occupied with a number of smaller stores such as a butcher shop, newspaper store, and clothing store. Figure 4-4b presents the inside of the neighborhood store shown on Figure 4-4a. The photo shows a nicer side of the store – a new fridge for the dairy products can be found behind the cashier. Only one cashier line is usually open at any given time.

### *Large Stores*

The hypermarkets as well as the other large stores located in the city were well known by all participants. While the large stores are relatively new to Polish consumers, most participants visit a large store regularly (e.g., weekly or monthly). It was evident that there was a pattern of regular shopping activity at the large stores, which indicates that shopping at the large store became a part of the regular shopping experience not a special, isolated activity. Shopping at the large markets was found to be a weekly activity as well as a family activity.

*2-1:… for large shopping I go to the hypermarket.*

*7-1/4: I usually go to a large supermarket like Tesco or Geant when I need to do a large shop. I tried to shop for one week because it saves time and it's convenient to have enough food for few days at home. So then I don't have to go shopping everyday…Usually I go shopping with my husband especially when I go to the supermarket. It is very convenient to go together.*

*9-1: I also go shopping in a hypermarket like once a week or so.*

*11-1: When I need to buy many things I go to Geant once or twice a month.*

*8-6: I go to the supermarket with my husband because he is my driver.*

*15-6: … to supermarket or hypermarket, sometimes I go with my friends or my father or my brother to spend sometime together.*

*16-3: when we go for a big shop, we go as a family except my father.*

*23-18: I do the bigger shopping with my husband.*

***Open-air market***

Those who chose to use other retail formats than small and large stores talked about their lifestyle and how that influenced their choice of retail format for grocery shopping. For instance, one participant, in her early 30s, indicated that her health conscious lifestyle is the reason for shopping at the open-air market. She preferred to purchase fresh produce at the open-air market because she believes that the open-air

**A. Outside**


**B. Inside**

**Figure 4-4. An example of the neighborhood store in Krakow, Poland**


**Figure 4-5. Locations of hypermarkets in Krakow**

market carries the fresher and better quality products than the large store. She also mentioned that these products are home grown and are not imported.

> *5-18: I think that it is faster there (open-air market). I like talking to the sellers and negotiating for price. I like when they give me a little discount. For example, they give me one carrot for free. It's silly but I think I like these types of contacts with people. In addition, I'm more conscious about what I'm eating now. I'm more concerned about my health in general. People from villages, most of them are farmers; sell fresh produce, such as fruits and vegetables. I tend to choose vegetables with some soil on them.*

Kiosks can be found throughout the city. Several clusters of them are located in heavy traffic areas, such as the train station, tram/ bus station and city center. They can also be found in the commercial areas close to the residential areas. Some kiosks specialize in a small variety of products such as cigarettes and paper products, fruits and

**Figure 4-6. Open-air market in Krakow**

sweets, bakery products, or processed meat products; others carry a wide variety of general merchandise from fruit to shaving foam. One participant said that she prefers using a kiosk format for grocery shopping because it is convenient for her to purchase products without going into the store – she rides a bicycle all the time.

> *21-7: I usually buy grocery products at this medium size kiosk close by my house. I ride a bicycle to everywhere so it's convenient for me to stop at this kiosk rather than going to a store where I have to park my bicycle outside. It's quicker and more convenient.*

**Theme #2: Distinctive basket of products for each retail format**

Participants tend to have specific product groups that they purchase at each store format. For example, most of participants mentioned in almost identical order that they purchased the fresh products such as bread, butter, milk, cheese, and yogurt daily at the neighborhood stores. Small stores are also visited when participants need to replenish the product right away.

*7-2: I must buy bread, milk, and things like that almost everyday.*

*9-3: I buy fresh produce and dairy products such as fruit, cheese, milk, and meat. I can also buy them in small quantity.*

*15-5: …buy basically bread, butter, milk, and so on.*

*16-1: For very simple stuff or a small amount of goods like bread, milk and butter, we buy at the nearest shop.*

*9-3: I buy fresh produce and dairy products such as fruit, cheese, milk, and meat. I can also buy them in small quantities.*

*16-2: Oh, for bread we go to shop everyday. Whenever we are out of milk, butter, or mineral water, we go to the shop.*

Participants associated the large stores with a large amount of products that can be stored for a week or up to a month. Mostly the packaged products (e.g., washing powder, health and beauty products, and paper products) and the special products (e.g, imported cheese) that can't be found in small stores are the most commonly purchased items at the large stores.

*9-4/5: Washing powder, toothpaste and shampoo…I basically buy the packaged products such as washing powder and paper products at the hypermarket.*

*16-1: …washing powder, soap, food products that can be stored for long time.*

*23-4: Things like milk, mineral water, sugar, cosmetics, and toiletry – toilet paper that can stay longer.*

*11-2: I buy special things such as processed meat, sweets, and imported cheese because they have wide variety of product choices.*

One participant preferred to purchase fresh produce at the open-air market because she believes that the open-air market carries the fresher and better quality products than the large store does. She also mentioned that these products are home grown and are not imported.

> *5-18: I'm more conscious about what I'm eating now. I'm more concerned about my health in general. People from villages, most of them are farmers; sell fresh produce, such as fruits and vegetables. I tend to choose vegetables with some soil on them.*

These baskets of products were chosen based on the following reasons: daily necessity; lower price; availability of the products; and perceived quality. All of the participants considered that routine products (e.g., bread, milk, cheese) must be purchased daily. On the other hand, packaged products which are usually available at both the small and the large store were usually purchased in bulk at the large stores due to the lower price. The special products, such as imported food products, were also purchased at the large stores since the small stores carry mainly the domestic products. A few participants also talked about the high quality of products that they could only get at the specialty stores (e.g., butcher shop, bakery, open-air market) where they purchased the specific items such as meat, sausage, or vegetables.

**Theme #3: Impulsive purchasing behavior at the large stores**

Participants pointed out that they tend to purchase more than what they need due to the large packages used at the large store as well as make unplanned purchases. The atmosphere of the store and visual presentation of the store seems to influence their purchasing behavior. In an environment of abundance, participants indicated that they do not easily find what they want. Participants usually noticed the promotional displays and sampling stands where they could try out new products if they wanted to. “Self-service” format also seems to have an impact on the participant’s impulsive purchasing behavior. One participant mentioned that she enjoys visiting the music department at the large store and spends “too much” time looking through CDs.

> *15-7: I check out the items that I do not need.*
>
> *16-14: We also buy other things as well while getting the items that were planned.*
>
> *20-11: I also tend to buy something that I didn’t plan to buy in supermarket or in hypermarket. These are things that I want but I do not necessarily need that at the moment.*

The duration of shopping also appears to influence the participant’s in-store shopping behavior. In addition, most participants said that they do not make a plan prior to grocery shopping. Compared to the relatively short shopping time spent at the small stores, participants mentioned that they spend an hour to three hours at the large stores.

Impulsive shopping behavior among participants was evident and some participants were struggling to break the habit of unplanned purchases. In addition, some participants were rather ashamed of their impulsive-purchasing behavior at the modern retail outlets. Most participants said that they did not make a list for their grocery shopping.

> *8-1: I buy too much because large packages … throwing away much of food products…I’m usually disappointed in myself. I’m upset about myself because I buy too much.*

### Theme #4: Unwillingness to Change in Patronage Behavior

A few participants showed great resistance to store switching. This behavior is another indication of strong presence of "unwillingness to change" which can be found easily among people who experience dramatic change in either their lives or in the environment surrounding them. When the size of change in the environment is substantial, people tend to hang on to their habits and become nostalgic about the past. As much as there is a great deal of excitement toward the new market environment, anxiety toward the dramatic changes seems to make an impact on the Pole's shopping behavior.

It appears that introducing a new product is a challenging task in Poland. Several participants showed rather strong resistance toward switching as well as trying out new products. When participants were asked what made them try out new products, most of their answers were in the line of "I know what I like and why should I try something new".

Credit card use is not popular in Poland. Although Polish consumers are slowly changing their habit of payment, the speed of change seems to be rather slow. Participants felt differently about using a credit card at the retail outlets. While use of a credit card at a specialty store (e.g., clothing) and supermarket/hypermarket seems to be more popular, they tend to use cash for a small quantity of daily grocery purchases at neighborhood stores. Some participants found it very convenient to use a credit card at the hypermarket where they tend to make a large purchase so that they don't need to worry about not having enough cash in hand.

Most of the participants use cash as the method of payment at the small store. In fact, they do not have any other choices, since the small stores are not equipped for credit card transactions. It was evident that Poland is still a cash dominant society. Credit card ownership is relatively low compared to Western countries due to the fact that their banking industry is in its infancy. Participants indicated that they feel more comfortable with using cash as a payment method over using credit cards.

> *7-7: I usually use cash at the small shops.*
>
> *9-17: I wouldn't mind using the credit card in small shops as well but they don't accept the credit card.*
>
> *7-8: It's more convienient to pay cash for small things like newspaper, bread and butter. It would be funny to pay by credit card for these things in Poland. You must know in Poland we need time to get used to the credit card. It is very convenient but not everybody is using it because not everybody feels comfortable about using it.*
> *11-25/26: I pay cash because the credit card is not so popular in our shopping environment. Although we can use credit card at large store we can't use credit at small stores. It is the tradition in our society (pay with cash).*
>
> *20-14: … for groceries I always use cash, even in the big market. If I don't have enough cash then I'll use the credit card. I don't know why but I prefer using cash to pay for groceries.*

One participant pointed out that the general retail environment in Poland is not yet credit card friendly. Except for a few large supermarkets and hypermarkets (mainly foreign owned) retail outlets do not accept credit cards or bankcards. Other participants had different concerns in mind – e.g., buying products on credit. Perhaps Polish consumers perceive the credit card as a high-risk innovation. In addition, some participants do not prefer to use a credit card because they believe that they can control their money better when they physically handle it. A few participants said that they used a credit card as the payment method at the large stores because of the large size of the purchase, convenience, and safety in terms of no need for carrying a large amount of cash.

> *3-3: I use my plastic card to pay. I easily lose money so not having to carry cash with me is very convenient.*
>
> *9-17: Basically I buy a lot so I don't want to carry cash to hypermarket.*
>
> *23-41: It is safer and I don't have to worry about having enough cash because I have a credit card.*

## Findings from *Retail Attributes* Responses

The three dimensions of retail attributes reviewed in the conceptual context were used to organize the results of open coding analysis on the topic of the retail attributes. Three dimensions include product related, store related, and service related attributes.

### Theme #1: Multi-dimensional Convenient Orientation - Proximity versus One-stop Shopping

From all the interviews, the most frequently used word to describe the reason of patronizing a store for grocery shopping, whether it is a small store or a large store, was "convenient". In general, participants used the term "convenient" to describe the number of retail attributes, which presented more than one dimension of the convenient orientation. For the small stores, participants defined the convenience in terms of the proximity of the store, short shopping time, and personal service (e.g., special order). Participants mentioned that it is convenient to shop at the large stores because they can buy everything in one store "one-stop shopping". A few participants also talked about the extended store hours (e.g., 24 hours a day) as a convenient feature of the large store.

Participants indicated that the location of the store is an influential factor in selecting a large store. Figure 4-6 is the map of Krakow - the yellow star indicates the center of the city and five red stars (from the top, Geant, Hit, Krakemia, TESCO, and Carrefour) and a blue star (Makro Cash and Carry) indicate the locations of large stores. Most participants said that they visited most of the large stores in town out of curiosity but they always returned to the one that is located near to their residences. Participants who live in the Northeastern part of the city mostly mentioned Geant, Billa, or Krakemia as their choice of the large store. They do not consider TESCO or Carrefour as an alternative for the large stores due to the location of these stores (i.e., Southwest corner of the city). They also perceived these stores to be very similar to each other and do not feel a need of comparing their choice of store with the alternatives in the city. For instance, the investigator lived in the northwest side of the city (around a blue star) and it took about an hour to get to TESCO either using the shuttle bus or public transportation (bus and tram).

> *11-22: I usually go to Geant because it is close from my flat. It takes an hour to go to Carrefour and about 40 minutes to go to Tesco by bus. They are too far away from my flat. I know what they are like and I don't see much of differences in them compare to Geant or Billa.*
>
> *3-1: Most of food stuffs, I buy at the hypermarket. I go to Geant and Krakemia*
>
> *15-22/23: I visited them (other hypermarkets) once or twice but I always come back to the nearest one. Because I can always find the similar products in similar prices at the nearest store. I don't see much difference among all these stores.*

A few of them expressed the problems associated with the travel method since the main purpose of shopping at the large stores is to make large purchases. Reportedly, it takes 5 minutes to 20 minutes to get to the large store by car. All participants agreed that they need a car in order to go shopping at the large store. Although using public transportation (e.g., bus, tram) is one of the ways to travel to the large stores, a number of problems seem to discourage participants to pursue this method, such as carrying heavy bags.

> *1-6: I take my car when I go to hypermarket.*
>
> *7-6: It's very important to have a car to go shopping at the supermarket. We usually buy many things so having a car is very convenient. You know it's so uncomfortable to ride a bus with many bags.*
>
> *15-11: By car. Buses are crowded and it's uncomfortable.*
>
> *16-5: It (bus)'s very uncomfortable. We usually buy lots of things that's why going by bus and having all those bags and it's very tiresome. And we don't have to do it since we have a car.*

Another interesting finding was the appreciation of one-stop shopping which is one of the key retail attributes of the large retail format. This point can be tied back to the wide variety of product assortment offered by the large stores. One of the large store formats that exists in Krakow is nested in a large building with a number of specialty stores and a food court. Participants found it to be very convenient because they can purchase everything under one roof and finish the shopping quickly.

> *3-2: I can buy everything that I need for one week in one place. I think that their foodstuffs are fresh. They also offer reasonable price.*
>
> *15-15: I find it convenient (everything is in one place).*
>
> *16-11: I think it's very comfortable to go to one store and do all the shopping and go home because we get tired.*
>
> *20-25: I like it because I can shop for many things at one place. They have everything in one place: food products, clothes, music, magazines, home appliances and so on.*

*23-38: I go to Macro because it takes less time, once a month, and I can make a big shopping there and good price.*

*3-2: I do not necessarily like hypermarket but I find it very convenient. I can buy everything that I need for one week in one place. I don't want to waste time at shopping. I think that shopping is time consuming.*

**Theme #2: Trade-off Approach between the Product Related Attributes and Service Related Attributes**

Participants frequently compared the advantages and disadvantages of shopping at the small and the large stores. While their grocery shopping habits have been altered dramatically from the past, they still retain the traditional way of shopping as part of their shopping habits. Store related attributes were rarely mentioned by the participants and it may indicate that they do not place high importance on store related attributes such as store layout, display, and store atmosphere. However, participants were consistently comparing the product related attributes (e.g., product assortment, price) with the service related attributes (e.g., convenience, personalized service). The small stores were perceived to be more convenient and to provide better and more services while participants associated the large stores with a variety of product assortments and with low price. Some participants mentioned that they do not particularly enjoy shopping at the large stores because of the poor quality of service (i.e., unfriendly and untrained staff), but they still make a regular shopping trip at the large store because of the lower price and the convenience of one-stop shopping. Those who were not satisfied with the assortment of the products at the small stores also visited the large store for product variety.

Most participants associated limited selection and high price with the small stores. These shortcomings of shopping at the small stores are considered to be a small price to pay for the convenience that most participants were seeking in their daily shopping activity. One participant found the offering of smaller packaged products to be an attractive attribute for the small stores. In addition, a few participants indicated that better quality of products is the reason for selecting a grocery store.

> *11-3: they have limited selections.*
>
> *15-29: Price is higher and product assortment is limited. But I go there because it's convenient.*
>
> *8-1: … I can buy the quantity I need even if it is more expensive than the supermarket.*
>
> *23-15: I prefer to buy meat and bread at this store because the quality of meat and bread is better at this shop.*

A number of product related attributes were mentioned by most participants as follows: cheaper price, variety of product assortment, and one-stop shopping. Participants were sure of the price differences in the packaged products (e.g., paper products, washing powder, cleaning chemicals) between the small stores and large stores. They found the lower price to be the most important attribute in shopping at the large store. One participant who described herself as a promotion hunter pointed out the promotions make the prices at the large store very competitive at the market place. A wide variety of products was also frequently mentioned by participants along with the lower price. Some of them simply appear to enjoy the choices available to them at the large stores and others were more specific with use of the large stores as a source of their desired products (e.g., imported cheese) which can not be found in the small stores.

*23-37: I think in general it is the price. There is a bigger choice at the large store. For instance, washing powder and toiletry in general there is a bigger choice there. Price is strictly connected with the choice with the assortment because the quality of products is the same whether I buy them at small shop and big shop. In general, I think it's the price.*

*11-17: A large store offers products at a lower price.*

*9-5: I'm a promotion hunter and they are pretty much cheaper with promotion at the hypermarket than anywhere else.*

*20-24: Geant, I think they offer a big variety and good quality of products*

*23-2: … the lower prices and great assortment of products.*

*7-10: When I have time I prefer shopping at the supermarket because of the better price and the variety of products in one place. It's very important to me that I can choose and buy everything in one place…Tesco always has many promotional products… They (Krakemia) have good quality products and an excellent warranty for shoes.*

*1-3: If he (small shop owner) can't get some product, such as French cheese…then I'll go to hypermarkets.*

The store brand concept has been introduced to Polish consumers from the very beginning of the opening of the hypermarkets. Most participants showed very little interest in or knowledge of the store brand products. Those who tried the store brand products shared their negative experience with store brand products.

*15-28: I try to avoid them (store brand products) because I think they are made with the lowest quality ingredients. I have tired the Tesco brand chocolate and the taste of chocolate reminded me of sweets from 80s - no cocoa in the chocolate. We used to call it as the "product that is the nearest to chocolate". I may not be objective about this but their fruit juices (store brand) seem to have the lowest quality.*

In contrast to the store related retail attributes, participants had much to talk about regarding service related retail attributes for both small and large stores. It appears that participants enjoy the polite and helpful staff, personalized service and friendly environment when they shop at the small stores. An intimacy created between the participant and the store owner/staff seems to be the core value to the service related retail attribute for the small stores. According to some of the participants, the small stores in the neighborhood are also used as a gathering place for the customers in the neighborhood. Participants obviously enjoy visiting the neighborhood stores because the store owner/staff not only recognize them as customers but also treat them as valuable customers. The friendly shopping environment created by providing special service appears to play a significant role in building an intimate (close) relationship between customers and seller at the small stores. Participants mentioned a number of special services offered by the small stores, such as reserving special products, placing special orders, and allowing belated payment.

> *8-18: In the neighborhood store, I can count on storeowner if I have any questions about products.*
>
> *9-13: I have lots of fun at the store because they have friendly staffs and they save special products for me. For example, when I buy meat they make sure to remove not so good part before they weigh the piece of meat. It's sort of personal care that I don't get at the hypermarket. No queues. It takes shorter time to make shopping. It's much quicker at the small shops.*
>
> *11-14/17: I prefer one to others because the sales people are very polite … It's very good…When I need some information about the product they always try to help me out. They are polite and take good care of customers. They are very helpful.*
>
> *20-33/35: In the small market, they care about their customers more than the big market. If you are a frequent shopper at the store, they will greet you with smile. You become somebody to them…I like to go to a small shop because they know me. I like it when they greet me by saying good morning or bye bye or something like that. Sometimes they provide extra service and take time to speak with you. It is nice.*

*23-57: It is very convenient that when you go to a small local shop that you can leave a special order with the storeowner. You can ask them to bring some food or specific type of meat or something like this for next week or the day. And they will do it for you. I can also make shopping without paying at the time. For example, if I don't have cash at the purchase, it's Ok with them to pay them next day because we know each other very well. I'm a reliable customer.*

Those who enjoy the intimate relationships with the store owner/staff were mainly female and in their 40s or 50s. Interestingly, younger participants shared different shopping experiences at the small stores. They perceived the quality of service to be poor and staff not to be trained properly for their jobs. One participant described it as the problems that can be found anywhere in Poland. He also talked about how this condition influenced his shopping behavior in the small stores.

*3-8: There is no tradition of good service in Poland. Most people don't realize that and they accept the reality. They may even say that they are satisfied with their experiences. Staff is usually not well paid so they are not motivated by how much I buy at their store and often they are not trained for the job as well.*

*16-24: I think the sales staff should show more respect to me as their customer. But I don't get angry over a situation like this and I try not to make a big deal out of the situation. It makes me feel unpleasant but not angry. I try not to get angry about things that I have no control over. I think it's a general problem in Poland. They should be nicer to customers. I try to make shopping as short as possible and not to make a conversation with sales staff. It's very rare to find a store that provides good service.*

*20-34: I don't expect staff to be helpful. I avoid situations that I need to get help from staff at the store.*

Participants mainly pointed out that it is impossible to get any type of personal service at the large stores. Some of them were also not pleased with the limited services that were offered by the large stores. First of all, participants mentioned that it is rare to find a staff who can help them with questions or problems. One participant shared her experience in shopping for a home appliance at the large store and how difficult it was due to the absence of sales staff to assist her. The other participant perceived herself as an enemy in the eye of the staff at the large stores based on the treatment she received from the unfriendly and rude sales staff at the large stores. However, one participant described that minimal personal contact (service) is expected at the large stores, thus the quality of service did not concern her. A few participants also indicated that they do not have high expectations about the better service offerings and/or qualities at the large stores.

> *8-18: it is impossible to find the sales staff when I need help.*
>
> *3-8: they don't offer any services, in my opinion. Staff is rude and so on. I don't get any help in selecting products. I don't expect any services but good price from hypermarket.*
>
> *11-20: It was horrible when I tried to buy a vacuum cleaner in Geant. First of all, I couldn't find anybody to help me with products in the electronic department. It is almost impossible to buy an electronic product without assistant of salesperson.*
>
> *1-4/8/10: It's really hard to find someone to explain about the products in hypermarket… In my opinion, however, staff at hypermarket do not care about the customers since they do not own the business…my experience was usually either the staff did not have proper product knowledge or the staff was not willing to help. It's really frustrating.*
>
> *20-27: It is impossible to find a staff to ask about the price.*
>
> *7-11: I don't think it (good customer service) is that important at supermarket. I don't need to talk with somebody at supermarket because it is very big place you pick out what you want and put in the basket. The only personal contact is with cashier. So I don't pay much attention about the friendly sales clerks at supermarket.*
>
> *20-33: if you go to a big shop or supermarket, they treat you like enemy. No one knows you and sometimes they are not nice.*

Most of the participants also mentioned the long “queues” at the checkout is a problem in the large stores. They also associated “crowdedness” with the “queues”’ at the checkout. Furthermore, they mentioned that they get nervous when the store gets crowded with too many people. They, however, chose to shop at the large stores. After all, it is convenient for them in terms of saving both time and money. Participants indicated that the length of the queues was too long for them in general and more things can be done for the congestion at the checkout area. One participant described her frustrating experience at the large store. She had to wait for about 40 minutes to checkout. Other participants shared her negative experience citing a series of service related problems including the absence of price tags, unavailable staff on the selling floor, the rude cashier, and unreasonable store policy at the large store.

> *2-6: I don’t like shopping at hypermarket. I hate wasting my time queuing and looking for the products I need.*
>
> *7-14: I don’t want to queue anymore. If there is a long queue, I don’t have to buy here. I hate queuing. Sometimes I have stay in a long queue and it makes me feel very nervous.*
>
> *8-10: Sometimes I get nervous when it’s too crowded in the supermarket.*
>
> *15-41: Sometime in Carrefour, the sales associates are invisible. It’s not that easy to find them. Mostly there are 20 to 30 checkout lanes but I usually have to wait in queues for at least 10-15 minutes. It’s too long for me. Also, only few checkout lanes are also designated for people with few items.*
>
> *16-22: Sometimes I wonder why they do not open all of checkout lanes when their customers are waiting in queues. It’s really bad during the busy time.*
>
> *9-19: Negative part is definitely the queues at the checkout. In hypermarket no floor staff is around so I can’t ask about the products. If I end up picking up an item with no price tag on, there are hug problems at the checkout afterward. For example, if I had two identical items and it turns out to be one had barcode and the other one did not, sometimes the cashier blames me for the missing barcode.*

*It's ridiculous. If that's not the case it takes forever for them to put the barcode on the item in order for me to buy it. Besides they don't bag the items for me. If you ask for a bag, sometimes I buy around 300 zloty worth of items and they charge me 50 groszy for a bag. It is absurd!*

*23-58~62: For example, sometimes I have to wait in the queue for 40 minutes in Makro…Sometimes I feel like to leave all the things there and go home because it's takes too long…Waiting and waiting and waiting…. Usually my husband goes for a walk and I stay in the queue...I get upset and I feel very tired. In general it takes too long to check out.*

A few participants pointed out the flexible store hours to be an attractive attribute in selecting the large store. Figure 4-7 shows the signage indicating the store hours of TESCO in Krakow (i.e., 24 hours a day, 7 days a week). At the time of conducting the research, TESCO was the only large store that had the extended store hours. Those who have busy schedules and wish to avoid the crowded shopping environment seem to appreciate the flexible store hours more than others. The benefits of the extended shopping hours would be avoiding crowds, long queues, and bad traffic conditions. One participant with a large family of four children talked about how she takes advantage of the extended store hours. The investigator visited the TESCO at 1:00am one evening and witnessed only a few people shopping in the store. Shopping during the extended store hours is not yet popular among Polish consumers due to the limited transportation methods (no public transportations available and relatively low car ownership).

*7-10: I like TESCO because I can go there very late at night when not too many people are around. They are open 24 hours a day …They (Krakemia) have good quality products and an excellent warranty for shoes. It is safe to buy shoes there because if I buy shoes at a small specialty shop, they may not have any warranty or only for one month or so.*

*23-27: Tesco was an attraction for us only because of store hours – 24 hours. We would never go there during daytime because traffic is very bad. We take a short cut to get there in the late evening and there is practically no traffic then.*


**Figure 4-7. TESCO store in Krakow: Signage for the store hours**

Lastly, a couple of participants talked about the store policies which presents an interesting aspect of the service related retail attributes. One participant commented on how she felt when the security guards stopped and inspected her as she was leaving one of the large stores in town. Although she understood the necessity of this procedure, she perceived this experience to be embarrassing and uncomfortable. The other participant, who is in her 40s and physically challenged, eagerly shared her experience regarding the unreasonable store policy and management practice at the one of the large stores in town. A couple of years ago she went to Geant for the first time and found out that they had specially designed trolleys for the physically challenged people. However, she was stopped by the security guard at the exit door and told that she could not take the trolley to her car. The store policy did not allow the trolley to leave the store premises due to the high cost of the specially designed trolleys. She was furious about the unreasonable store policy but even the store manager didn't make any changes to accommodate the impractical side of the store policy. The participant ran into the same problem at the store.

### Theme #3: Importance of Store Related Retail Attributes on Purchasing Decision

In general, most participants had not much to say about the store related attributes. Of special note is that participants didn't talk about the layout of the store, store appearance, fixtures, and displays for the small stores. The only comment related to store related attributes for the small store was the ease of finding products and less crowdedness compared to the large stores. However, participants had more to say about the large stores. In contrast to the remarks on the small stores, participants frequently talked about the difficulty of finding products that they were looking for. The size of the large store is apparently one of factors that made it difficult for the participants to find what they want. Crowdedness in the store made it even more challenging and tiresome for them. Another factor is that the store constantly changes the location of products. Participants also pointed out that price tags were frequently not to be found on the product at the large store. A few participants indicated that they do not purchase products when they do not have the price information. This testimony reflects the price prone nature of customers who shop at the large stores. Only one participant mentioned the sensory conditions in the large store (e.g., lighting and temperature).

> *9-13: Smaller shop is not crowded and it's easier to find things.*
>
> *2-6: No matter how many signs are displayed I still find it hard to find the products quickly.*
> *8-18: I usually have trouble finding products…. also too crowded…*

*1-4: I don't like shopping at the hypermarket because it is difficult me to find products.*

*7-13: It is good to have signage - you know it's easier to find things around. But sometimes I get lost in supermarket. Maybe they should improve the signage or store layout. Sometimes the price tag is not at the proper place. Price is very important for me so when I can't find price tag I don't buy it. I end up wasting much time looking for the price of the product.*

*9-19: Not all products are marked with price.*

*20-26: No, they always change around so it's difficult to find things. Sometimes they put wrong labels. It's something what I don't like about the hypermarket. I generally don't use signs unless I get lost.*

*22-8: It has very narrow aisle so it's hard to move around with the cart (trolley).*

*23-24/25: Well, it (Tesco)'s so crowded I get tired easily. It's too warm inside as well and their lighting bothers me. I don't know why but this kind of light in the big shops makes me tired quickly. Maybe it's too bright.*

## Findings from the "Post-Purchase Behavior" Responses

Participants were asked to share either the satisfied or dissatisfied experiences with retailers. Most of participants said that overall they are satisfied with their retail experiences in the current market environment. A number of participants, however, had a rather difficult time giving specific examples of unsatisfactory retail experiences. Their first response was that they are generally satisfied with the retailers that they patronize. When the question was probed in the specific context, for instance about products, the store, and the service, then participants started sharing their experiences. In a few cases, the investigator provided a hypothetical situation of dissatisfaction caused by a product related problem (e.g., defects) to investigate the reaction of the participant. The findings of the open-coding analysis in the post-purchase behavior include overall retail satisfaction, complaint behavior, repatronize intention, and word of mouth. The results of the thematic analysis are presented in the next section following open-coding analysis.

**Theme #1: Low Expectation and High Satisfaction**

All participants indicated that they were satisfied with their current retail experiences. When the question was asked about whether they were satisfied with their shopping experiences, the answer of participants was a simple and clear “yes”. When participants talked about how much they enjoyed their shopping experience, they tended to talk about their past experiences. Interestingly, most of participants were using their previous experiences as the reference point to evaluate their current retail experience. Although the participants have been exposed to the new retail environment under the market economy for almost a decade, the expectation toward their shopping experience appears to be formed based on the experience in the past. Since the expectation is created by previous experiences it appears that most participants consider anything is better than how things were before 1989. Participants, in their 20s, also indicated that their expectation was based on their parents’ experience during the time of shortage.

> *1-8: Yes, I am (satisfied).*
>
> *15-52: In general, I’m satisfied.*
>
> *20-41: It is much better that how it was before. Generally for basic things, yes I am (satisfied). But some of the shops are not very nice. People don’t care about their work.*
>
> *22-43/57: Yes (I’m satisfied). I don’t have many negative experiences…On the whole I am satisfied with the stores in Poland.*

Their experience in the past not only has an impact on participants' overall retail satisfaction but also on their evaluation criteria for other retail attributes, such as product assortments, customer services and store policies. For instance, a few participants talked about how unfriendly the store clerks were at the small neighborhood stores. However, they would also say that they feel sorry for those people who work long hours under bad working conditions. Some participants dealt with unsatisfactory situations by simplifying their purchasing process at the store. For instance, most participants indicated that they are satisfied with the merchandise assortment and store presentation (i.e., layout and visual display) with a few exceptions. A few participants mentioned insufficient labeling (i.e., missing price label), deceptive (misleading) display, and lack of signs. While most participants were satisfied with two of the components of retailing, products and store, participants seemed to have the most unsatisfactory experiences in the service aspect. Most service related factors were linked to the interaction between the participants and sales staff in the store. The retail environment in Poland has improved dramatically compared to the past, especially in terms of broad product offerings, abundant imported goods, and better prices. However, customer service is one of the areas that retailers in Poland are still significantly lagging behind compare to other countries.

**Theme #2: Passive "Voice" Action versus Aggressive "Word-of-Mouth"**

Participants tend to be passive about voicing to retailers any problems with the products or services that they purchased. Participants were very reluctant to share their experiences of complaining to retailers. Most of them said they have never complained to retailers in terms of addressing problems related to the store (e.g., returning defected products, exchanging products, and asking for a cash refund). They indicated no interest in engaging in any type of complaint to retailers.

Participants shared a number of reasons that may explain their reluctance to complain. First, participants considered that consumers should be responsible for what they purchase. They indicated that it is the consumer's duty to carefully inspect the product as well as to be sure of the product specifications prior to making the final purchase. Furthermore, participants considered complaining to a retailer as inappropriate behavior. Some participants considered that complaint behavior is inappropriate in Polish society. The perception of complaint behavior apparently has not changed much from the past when consumers could not have considered returning products to the seller under any circumstances. It appears that the negative experiences with retailers in the past have a very strong impact on how a Polish consumer responds to a dissatisfactory retail experience now. Interestingly, a number of participants mentioned in many different ways that it is neither a nice nor right thing to return products to sellers. One participant used the word "ashamed" to describe how she felt about returning products to the seller. While another participant explained that it is assumed that a consumer should know what she or he purchases at the time in Poland. Thus, it is the responsibility of individual, not of the seller, to examine the condition and the quality of the product.

> *8-24/26: I think that it is not nice to return things ... I have never returned anything in my life. Because I don't believe it is appropriate. Because I know that it will be very upsetting situation for me so I avoid the situation all together.*

> *7-15/16: If I was at home by myself and my husband is out of town, I wouldn't do anything because I am not brave enough to do something…I bought a canned fish (herring) that passed the expiration date. I was angry and complained about it to myself at home but I did nothing about it.*

*11-36: No, it is not the tradition in Poland. I guess it is connected with the extreme shortage situation in 1980s. We don't know what to do when we have a problem with the product. The younger generation may have better idea of how to deal with the situation like this.*

Second, the cost of complaining to retailers, both monetary and emotional, was considered to be too high. For the grocery products, the monetary cost (e.g., transportation fare) to return the product was usually higher than the price of the product. Regarding the emotional cost, a few participants mentioned their intention of avoiding the confrontational situations with retailers and others expressed their emotional vulnerability in dealing with retailers. While participants were explaining their behavior, some of them indicated strong reservations toward a confrontational situation in public. For some of them, it simply costs too much to confront the seller about small purchases, such as grocery products. In addition, they may fear being accused of lying or fear being treated with a hostile manner by the retailers.

*16-23: I think I've been lucky. I didn't have to return anything yet. But, in general, it's not worth it to go to hypermarket and to deal with people at the store.*

*20-39: I can see there are some problems with returning groceries because it is difficult to prove whether the product was not fresh or not at the time of purchase. I'm rather a shy person. I don't want to get into a quarrel with the staff in the store. I don't think it's worth it.*

*22-34: if I bought it (yogurt) at the supermarket I wouldn't have taken it back to the store since it's far away from home and I have to take a bus to get there. Bus fare may cost more than the price of the product. (laugh)*

Third, the participants' perception toward the retailer's resolution seemed to discourage the voicing action to retailers. Some of participants who never complained to retailers believed that their problems would not be resolved even if they had voiced them.

In addition, some participants mentioned that they do not know how to present the problems to retailers since they had no tradition of exchange or return practices in the past. Most participants were not only unaware of the return policy of the store they patronized but also they were not interested in finding out about it.

> *11-30/31: No (I didn't complain), because I knew that it would not be effective … storeowner would not have done anything for me. I just didn't want to waste my time and energy for something I had no control over.*

> *23-65: In Macro, for example, if you want to return something it is almost impossible. I just don't try. As far as the guarantee goes, they provide their own guarantee and they do not provide the guarantee of manufacturer. And this guarantee of Macro is not really reliable and you can't really exercise your rights as a consumer.*

> *7-17: It's very difficult to exchange. Because when the product is without any damages, for instance you think that the color is not good for you, you can't assume that you will get it exchanged or get the money back. Not every shop will agree to exchange it or give you money back. The product must be broken, destroyed or something like that.*

While the participants generally showed a reluctant attitude toward voicing opinions to retailers, some of them addressed their problems to the retailer. The high price of product appeared to have an impact on the choice of voicing action. One participant shared her voicing experience with a large foreign grocery retailer. In this case, the retailer put forth almost no effort to resolve her claim about a defective product, a pot imported from Italy, by passing down the responsibility to the manufacturer. The participant was discouraged to pursue her claim since the retailer suggested a lengthy process (i.e., 6 months or longer) with no guarantee of resolution. One participant shared her friend's long-winded voicing experience with a shoe retailer that lasted for 6 months. The retailer's first attempt to resolve the claim was by offering the repair service and the participant did not mind the resolution.

*8-24: If the product is more expensive, about 50 zloty, then I may take it back to the store.*
*11-36: It's depends on products for me. I wouldn't return food or any other grocery products because these are not that expensive. If I spend about 100zl or more on a product then I will go back to store. For example, if I bought a pair of shoes and wasn't satisfied with them, I would take them back to the store.*

*15-43/44: Well, once I returned a VCR. It broke down in 2 months so I took it back to get it repaired…If it would have broken down second time then they would have exchanged the product with new one.*

*20-38: If the product is not fresh I don't buy it. It's not worth of going back to the store with an inexpensive grocery product*

*9-28/29/31/32: It was rather an expensive pot and the first time I tried to boil water and I noticed some indent or scratch on the bottom of the pot…They said that they have to send the product to Italy because it was made in Italy, and if the manufacturer accepts the claim and then they will send me the new one but it will take 6 months…"Capetchz" – completely worn out slipper, means helpless; feeling down. I was very upset…I thought about it and I contacted them and asked for advice on my situation. I could have gone to court but I thought that was a waste of time. So I just gave up and stuck with the defective pot.*
*22-39: No, I didn't want the money back. I just wanted to exchange it with the same one. One of my friends bought a pair of hiking shoes that cost about 400zl with 3 months warranty. By the way it is not a normal practice in Poland. Warranty is usually for one month for shoes. Anyhow, something happened to the shoes within three months so she took it back and they exchanged to new pair. But she had the same problem with the second pair of shoes. When she took it back to the store they suggested that they would repair the shoes instead of money refund. My friend insisted on a money refund since she had the same problems with the both pairs of shoes. You know 400zl for a pair of shoes considered to be very expensive in Poland. Finally she got her money back but it took her about 6 months. Although I had no experience like this but hearing about my friend's experience I'm trying to be very cautious about situation like this.*

It appears that most of the participants put a great deal of emphasis on the negative word-of-mouth activity as the voicing action. Those who were reluctant to complain to retailers were not shy about sharing their negative experience with others (e.g., family, friends, colleagues). While participants showed limited information seeking and sharing behavior, they were more aggressive in spreading the word about the retailers based on their negative experiences with the retailers. Participants were eager to share their rather unpleasant experiences such as improperly trained sales staffs (i.e., unwillingness to help, rudeness, lack of assistance) and unreasonable store policies. It was important to them to share their experience with others as well as to hear about experiences of others to prevent them from the potential problems.

> *1-10: Of course, I would tell my friends about my experience and advise them not to shop there.*
>
> *7-22: I told them "Don't shop there".*
>
> *9-24: I'll say something negative – negative advertisement.*
>
> *11-29: I told my neighbors about my experience. I also told them not to shop at the store because the storeowner was not honest.*
>
> *15-54: Yes I would. My friends and family members also share their experiences with me. I was told that the floral shop close by the bus station had a very bad service. I don't usually pay attentions to gossips but I heard about this store from very close friend of mine so I remembered not to use that store.*
>
> *16-26: Of course, my friends share their experiences with me and vice versa. I try to avoid these stores.*
>
> *20-42: I would tell them. We usually exchange information about shops and our experiences.*
>
> *22-42: I would suggest that other people not shop at that store*

**Theme #3: Limited Store Switching Behavior**

Participants more likely returned to the same retailer even if they had a few negative experiences. A few participants indicated that their decision of whether to return to the same store or not would depend on how the retailer handled the situation in terms of the willingness to resolve the problem. Those who would continue to patronize the same store simply acknowledged the possibility of dealing with asimilar type of problem.

> *11-21: It depends on the situation. If a saleswoman were not willing to do anything for me after my request for help I would leave the store. There is no need to deal with an impolite salesperson anymore. I can always go to other stores. This is what's so great about having choices.*
>
> *15-53: It depends on how the retailer deals with the problem. If I had a fight with the storeowner or manager, I would not return to the store. But if I have a warranty of the product and the retailer is willing to take care of the problem, I'll come back to the store later.*
>
> *8-23: I'll be more careful next time when I shop at the store.*

Although participants showed their intentions and desires to stop patronizing at the stores where they had dissatisfactory experiences, most of participants ended up returning to the same stores. Participants perceived to have some alternatives for the small neighborhood stores since there are usually three to five small stores in their neighborhoods. However, it is unlikely that they would switch to another store based on a few unpleasant incidents. In the case of large stores, participants felt that they were given no choice but returning to the same store due to the location of other stores in the city. All participants used the proximity of the store from their homes as the only selection criterion for the large store where they currently patronized. Therefore, they would not switch to an other store that is located in other parts of the city because the switching costs (i.e., low car ownership, high price of gas, lack of time for shopping) would be higher than the potential benefits. Figure 4-5 shows that large stores are located quite apart from each other. Even though those stores appear to be close the map, the actual traveling time from one to the other would be great than it appears due to the poor road infrastructure and limited public transportation system. It was evident that the location of the store was not only used as one of the most important, if not the only, store selection criteria but also an important factor that influences the Polish consumers' store switching behavior.

> *2-9: For a small store, it may bother me little bit if I had a dissatisfactory experience but I would forget about it right away. I may try to avoid the particular sales staff I had problem with but I would not switch the store.*
>
> *16-25: I usually try not to return to the store where I had a bad experience. But sometimes it's not so easy to do that. If the store happens to be located very close to my house, I tend to go back to the store regardless of poor quality of service.*
>
> *2-9: If I have a bad experience at the hypermarket then I would stop going to the store for a while but eventually I'll return to the store.*
>
> *23-68: I usually give up shopping at the store where I had the bad experiences, such as strange attitude of sales person, staff doesn't provide good help, unfriendly, unpleasant and so on. I usually talk to the manager that I won't come back to the store. But it's usually connected with the small shops…it is difficult to go to another large store. There are not many of them in town so that we don't have many alternatives. We have to just come back to the same big shop.*

## Other Findings

### Theme #1: Influence of time perception in patronage behavior

The lifestyle of Poles has been heavily influenced by the changes that have occurred during the last decade. A number of participants shared their frustration with regard to the lack of time for shopping due to the increased work hours since the political and economic transition began in 1989. The most significant change in the Pole's work environment is "competition". As competition is increasing in the job market, the desire for acquiring more material goods is also getting stronger among Poles. Now they have to work longer hours and sometimes they have multiple jobs to make ends meet.

Due to the nature of shopping at the small store, the duration of shopping is relatively short. Those who consider time saving as the value of shopping at the small stores spend only about 5 minutes and others who enjoy the interaction with sales staffs tend to spend more time at the small stores. However, most participants found the easy accessibility and quick transaction to be the beneficial attributes for shopping at the small stores. As the result of frequent visits to the store, participants were able to spend the least amount of time at the store (e.g., grab and go). Participants are very familiar with the store layout and they also have a relatively short list of things to purchase.

> *2-6: I like shopping at the neighborhood stores because it's quick. I can go in and find what I want and go.*
>
> *1-3: I really like the owner of the shop. I like talking to him.*
>
> *11-16: I like this shop because they keep everything the same way. I've been shopping at this shop for 8 years and I know exactly where things are in the store.*

Participants usually go to supermarkets/ hypermarkets on Saturday or Sunday, to do a comparatively large amount of shopping. The lack of time for shopping during the week is one of the reasons given for shopping at the hypermarket during the weekend. Despite the busy schedule during the week, some participants chose to go shopping during the week to avoid the weekend shopping crowds at the large stores. Due to the nature of grocery shopping, that is more utilitarian than entertainment, participants seem to be mostly concerned with ease and the speed of the activity.

> *7-2: When I plan to go shopping for a week or two weeks, I like to go shopping either Saturday or Sunday evening.*

*15-1/2: Mostly (I shop) on Saturday and Sunday. Mostly (I shop) in the morning. I have more have more free time during the weekend.*

*16-4: We usually go to the hypermarket during weekend.*

*1-5: I avoid Saturdays and Sundays because that's when everybody goes shopping.*

*3-5: I usually go to hypermarket in the middle of week, Wednesday or Thursday because it's too crowded during the weekend.*

*9-7: I go in the middle of week so then there is no queue. . Nobody is shopping at that time (in the middle of week) of the week. I don't need to spend hours to get through other people and wait in line to check out.*

*11-7: I usually got to Geant in the middle of week. Once I went to Geant on Saturday and it was too crowded, too many people. I prefer to go to Geant in the late afternoon around 3 or 4 o'clock. When there is less traffic and people, shopping gets easier and more fun.*

### Summary of Analysis and Findings

This chapter has reviewed the analyses undertaken to investigate the Polish consumer's current retail experience. Open coding analysis was used to categorize the data and then thematic analysis was conducted to extract the underlining storylines from the data. Thus, the chapter detailed the findings related to each specific category and emergent theme. A more detail discussion of these overall findings is discussed in the next chapter along with the theoretical and practical implications.

# CHAPTER 5
# DISCUSSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

## Introduction

This chapter summarizes the research findings described in Chapter 4. A discussion of how the findings from Chapter 4 relates to the retail management and consumer behavior literature and theoretical implications for consumer behavior research are examined and managerial implications for international retailers are discussed. The chapter then concludes with a discussion of directions for future research and limitations.

## Review of Research Questions and Findings

As discussed in Chapter 1, this research addresses an issue of how new market environment influences the behaviors of individual Polish consumers. The overall research question is as follows:

> *How do changes in the market environment, in particular in the retail sector, affect the behaviors of Polish consumers, specifically in information search behavior, shopping behavior, and post-purchase (e.g., satisfaction, complaint) behavior?*

Given this overall question, three general research questions were developed as follow:

- *What changes have occurred in the Polish retail environment since the economic and political transition?*
- *How have the changes in the retail environment influenced Polish consumers in their patronage and consumption behavior?*
- *How does the Polish consumers' retail experience under the planned economy influence their patronage and consumption behavior in the current retail environment?*

Table 5-1 presents a comparison chart that shows the changes in the Polish consumers' retail experiences before and after the political and economic transition began in 1989. While the findings reviewed in Chapter 4 were used to depict the Polish consumers' retail experiences during the transitional period (1989-2001), related and supporting literatures were used to reconstruct the Polish consumers' retail experiences prior to 1989. As concluded in Chapter 4, the dramatic changes in the retail environment and retail experience under the planned economy appear to have a significant impact on the Polish consumers' current retail experience. These experiences are in terms of how Polish consumers search and use information, where they shop, how they shop, what they consider to be important in their shopping experience, how they evaluate the shopping experience, and how they handle the dissatisfactory retail experience.

## Discussion of Research Findings

This section examines the findings presented in Chapter 4 in terms of the retail management and consumer behavior literature. A broad range of research topics from the retail and consumer behavior literature is considered based on the findings presented in Chapter 4. This section is organized by the three general research questions that were raised and mentioned earlier in this Chapter. In addition, discussion of the findings in "time perception" is presented.

### Discussion of the Findings in the "Changes in the Polish Retail Environment"

Based on the results of data analyses including open-coding analysis, thematic analysis and participant observation, three major changes in the Polish retail environment are identified:

1. Introduction and development of new retail formats
2. Existence of variety of information sources
3. Highly competitive marketplace

A number of new retail formats have been introduced to consumers in Poland over the last decade (1989-2001). The importance of the Polish market in the Central and Eastern Europe can be proven by a large number of international retailers operating in Poland. Currently the most popular retail formats in Poland are the supermarket and hypermarket. In the mid-90s, hypermarket retailers from Western Europe entered the Polish market and have become extremely popular among Polish consumers. The popularity of these retail formats is related to the Polish retail environment of the past 40 years in Poland. At the introduction stage of new retail formats, Polish consumers were completely overwhelmed by the abundant products and the scale of the new retail stores. New retail stores are housed in new buildings and their facilities are as equally outstanding, if not better, than those found in Western European countries. Retailers also offer more customer service (e.g., customer service desk, warranty program) than ever, although the service component is still relatively lacking compared to other aspects of the retail environment (e.g., store facility, product assortments) in Poland.

Apparel specialty stores (e.g., Levi’s), fast food restaurants (e.g., McDonald’s), and direct marketing retailers (e.g., AmWay) were also introduced to the Polish marketplace during the last few years. The popularity of apparel specialty stores may not be as great as that of the hypermarket/supermarket, there is a great potential for the drastic growth in the near future. Having a relatively large young population seeking to

**Table 5-1. A Comparison Chart of Changes in the Polish Consumers' Retail Experience Before and After the Transition Organized by the General Research Questions**

| General Research Questions | Before Transition (Prior to 1989) | After Transition (1989-2001) |
|---|---|---|
| What changes have occurred in the Polish retail environment since the economic and political transition? | • State-owned stores and gray market<br>• Limited and controlled information sources<br>• Monopoly by state-owned stores under planned economy | • Introduction and development of new retail formats<br>• Existence of variety of Information sources<br>• Highly competitive marketplace |
| How have the changes in the retail environment influenced Polish consumers in their patronage and consumption behavior? | • Consistent pre-store search for grocery shopping due to supply shortage<br>• Extremely limited possibility of In-store information search<br>• Product availability being a only criteria of external search<br>• Constraint in time, frequency, and duration of shopping due to the controlled shopping environment<br>• Long queue and unpredictable product availability<br>• No concept of "service"<br>• No influence of store attributes on purchasing decision.<br>• No differentiation among stores – price and product assortments were unpredictable. | • Limited pre-store search for grocery shopping<br>• Various In-store information search behavior<br>• Influential factors to external information search behavior: price, product category, product knowledge<br>• Combination of daily and weekly grocery shopping<br>• Distinctive basket of products for each retail format<br>• Multi-dimensional convenient orientation: proximity versus one-stop shopping<br>• Trade-off approach: Between product related attributes and service related attributes<br>• Importance of store related attributes on purchasing decision<br>• Limited store switching behavior<br>• Influence of time perception in patronage behavior |
| How does the Polish consumers' retail experience under the planned economy influence their patronage and consumption behavior in the current retail environment? | • Lack of trustworthiness toward information sources<br>• Impulsive purchasing behavior due to the condition of shortage economy.<br>• Restricted and controlled patronage behavior<br>• Extremely low expectation and relatively high satisfaction in spite of the insignificant outcomes.<br>• Absolutely no voicing action to retailers<br>• No existence of third party consumer organization | • Lack of trustworthiness toward information sources<br>• Impulsive purchasing behavior at the large stores<br>• Unwillingness to change (remain the tradition) in patronage behavior<br>• Low expectation and high satisfaction<br>• Passive "Voice" action versus aggressive "Word-of-Mouth" |

mimic the Western pop culture and fashion may become a powerful force in the success of apparel specialty stores in Poland. The fast food restaurant format has also been extremely successful due to the favorable attitude toward the American style of dining by the younger generation in Poland. In addition, the form of direct selling exists in the Polish market. Considering the importance of networking among family, relatives, and friends in the Polish society and lack of a physical store, the direct selling format can also be an attractive option for retailers in the Polish market.

One of the most significant changes in the retail environment is the existence of various information sources. These types of marketing practices did not exist under the planned economy. In fact, Polish consumers developed a negative attitude toward any type of promotion campaigns since only products that were no popular and did not sell appeared in the advertising (Lofman, 1994). Now, retailers use various information sources (e.g., newspaper, magazine, billboard, TV, radio, leaflets, Internet) in the Polish marketplace. Large retailers appear to be more aggressive in using promotion campaigns than small retailers. An opening of TESCO store in Krakow (Fall 2000) is a good example of the use of an aggressive promotion campaign by a large foreign-owned retailer. Most participants were able to recall the massive scale of advertising that was carried out prior to the event of the store opening. In the case of small retailers, participants did not mention any examples of advertising and promotion campaigns. This response suggests that the use of advertising and promotion campaigns is not a common practice for small local retailers.

The use of billboards and leaflets by large retailers was the most easily observed and most frequently mentioned type of promotion by participants. Hypermarket retailers, mostly foreign owned with the exception of one Polish retailer, used the billboards and leaflets to inform their customers about the latest promotions. In addition, they used these channels of communication to build their store images. An interesting observation was made on how the two major hypermarket retailers, TESCO (U.K.) and Carrefour (France), differ in the use of these tools creating their store images in the Polish market. While both retailers used the billboards and leaflets as major tools for promotions, they differed significantly in terms of the content of message and style of visual presentation. For example, TESCO always focuses on presenting the image of the actual product with before and after promotional prices of the product. In contrast, Carrefour uses animated drawings of symbolic figures (e.g., three wise-men for the Christmas holiday season) with the message focused on value offerings and overall savings.

The growth of the retail sector has been impressive due to the substantial amount of investment in the Polish market by foreign retailers. As a result, competition among retailers has been highly elevated during the last few years. Most participants were easily able to name two or three large stores and better yet they visited most of the new large stores out of curiosity. However, Polish consumers do not seem to engage in comparison shopping within the same retail format. The proximity of the store is the most important criteria for store selection due to some barriers (e.g., relatively low car ownership) imposed by the unstable and poor economic situation in Poland. Consequently, large retailers appear to focus on the consumers who reside within the proximity of the store location. Limitations of mobility and the availability of transportation raise the cost of search and reduce the benefits of search because they limit the degree to which a consumer may shop around for alternative deals in the market.

More evident competition, however, appeared to exist between the small stores and the large stores. Although Polish consumers use each retail format for different shopping situations (i.e., daily shopping versus weekly shopping), the frequent comparisons made by participants between these two retail formats may indicate the possibility of direct competition in the future. Competition among retailers in the Polish marketplace will increase steadily as the rapid and aggressive development continues in the retail sector.

## Discussion of the Findings in the "Influence of the Changes in Retail Environment in the Polish Consumers' Consumption Behavior"

Nine emergent themes were presented to discuss the findings of how the changes in the retail environment influence the Polish consumers' consumption behavior. Table 5-2 presents the nine themes by the each of four topics reviewed in Chapter 2. These emergent themes are discussed next and organized by the topics.

### *Information Search Behavior*

It was unknown and uncertain how Polish consumers may behave in the current retail environment since they lived in a society where product information was not available and price was tightly controlled by the government. One can speculate that Polish consumers may enjoy having a wide selection of information sources that may help them in choosing the product that delivers the most value with minimum cost. But there is also a valid argument that the amount of information in the market place may overwhelm consumers and encourage them to simplify the search process by ignoring the external information sources and to use internal information sources based on their previous experiences.

Findings indicate that Polish consumers appear to enjoy the variety of product assortments but they pay little attention to maximize the benefit that can be gained from comparison shopping. According to the “economics of information” theory, search activity is assumed to render benefits to the consumer in terms of lower prices or higher product quality. Rational consumers are assumed to search for price/product information to the point where the marginal benefits are equal to the marginal costs of search. However, empirical evidence suggests that, contrary to economic logic, the average grocery shopper is fairly ignorant of the price of the items they place in their grocery basket, and only a small percentage of shoppers actually shop at different retail outlets to obtain the best deals (Urbany, 1986; Urbany, Dickson, & Wilkie, 1989).

**Table 5-2. Findings in the Influence of Changes in Retail Environment in the Polish Consumers’ Consumption Behavior by Research Topics**

| Topics | Emergent Themes |
|---|---|
| Information Search Behavior | 1. Limited pre-store search for grocery shopping<br>2. Diversity of In-store information search behavior<br>3. Influential factors to external information search behavior: price, product category, product knowledge |
| Patronage Behavior | 4. Combination of daily and weekly grocery shopping<br>5. Distinctive basket of products for each retail format |
| Retail Attributes | 6. Multi-dimensional convenient orientation: proximity versus one-stop shopping<br>7. Trade-off approach: Between product related attributes and service related attributes<br>8. Influence of store related attributes on purchasing decision |
| Post-purchase Behavior | 9. Limited store switching behavior |

Some evidence suggests that consumers' perception of the competitiveness of their local grocery market significantly impacts their search behavior (Zaichkowsky & Sadlowsky, 1991). If the consumer perceives that prices vary substantially in the market and that significant price reductions can be obtained by searching a variety of sellers, it is expected that a higher level of search will be undertaken. On the contrary, if consumers perceive that the market is fairly competitive and/or that there is a high level of advertising in that market which functions to reduce price dispersion, it is expected that the level of consumer search would be reduced. In this study, findings indicate that Polish consumers perceived the grocery stores, hypermarkets in particular, to be very similar in terms of product assortments and price offerings.

Avery (1996) proposes that the search for grocery items is a two-stage process, occurring both prior to selecting a seller (pre-store search) and after a particular seller has been identified (in-store search). Pre-store activities include reading advertisements, clipping coupons, and processing this information in terms of among store comparison and shopping lists. In-store search activities include price and product comparisons and search for special deals and couponed items. While findings indicate that Polish consumers engage in a limited search (e.g., pre-store search and in-store search), there are some indications (e.g., impulse purchases, participate in sampling) that they may be more active with the in-store search or more influenced by the information sources available in the store.

The price of the product, product category, and product knowledge had an impact on the pre-purchase search behavior. Although it did not apply to grocery shopping, other information sources, such as friends and family members were more frequently used to obtain information for other product categories. For instance, when Polish consumers want to purchase a "big ticket" item, such as electronics and furniture, they tend to broaden the range of information sources from the media-driven, impersonal information sources (e.g., billboard and leaflet) to the personal information sources (e.g., friend, family member, and sales staff).

### *Patronage Behavior*

Under the new retail environment, Polish consumers' patronage behavior in the context of grocery shopping had a drastic change in terms of time, duration, and frequency of shopping. Polish consumers chose to shop at both small and large stores for grocery products. While they maintain a habit of daily shopping which is deeply embedded in their traditional consumption culture, they also developed a new shopping habit – shopping weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly at large stores. Polish consumers, on average, spend 10 to15 minutes daily in a small neighborhood store. In contrast, they spend at least one hour to three hours in large stores during the weekend. Living in a dominant Catholic society, Polish consumers were not used to shopping during the weekend, especially Sundays. Currently, it is not unusual to go shopping on Sunday in Poland. These changes are not only triggered by the liberation of store hours but also changes in the workplace which is highly competitive and demands longer work hours during the weekday. Furthermore, some Polish consumers consider a trip to a large grocery store as a family activity for entertainment purposes.

Polish consumers distinguish these two types of stores in terms of the quantity of purchase as well as of different categories of products. Based on the nature of shopping, Polish consumers have a very distinctive set of products they purchase at the each retail format. For instance, they purchase staple products that require freshness such as milk, cheese, yogurt, and bread in small quantities at the small neighborhood store. Some of participants also mentioned that they use small specialty stores in the neighborhood for traditional products because of the homemade quality. In contrast, they purchase a variety of packaged products (e.g., detergents, paper products, coffee, snacks, and beverages), which can be stored for longer period at the large store. They also purchase specialty products such as imported cheese, which is hard to find in small stores.

***Retail Attributes***

Convenience orientation refers to the value placed on, and the active search for, products and services that provide personal comfort and/or save time in performing various activities (Brown, 1991). Previous research reveals that the convenience orientation is a multidimensional construct. For example, Yale and Venkatesh (1986) proposed that it could be classified into six major dimensions: time use, accessibility, portability, appropriateness, handiness, and avoidance of unpleasantness. Findings indicate that Polish consumers had a different set of convenience orientation for small and large stores. For small neighborhood stores, the accessibility, in terms of proximity to home or work and quick transaction, defines convenience. For the large stores, convenience refers to the one-stop shopping and proximity to home or work.

These findings also suggest that different set of retail attributes are used to evaluate their retail experience at each retail format. Results indicate that Polish consumers shop at large stores because of the potential benefits mainly from product-related attributes such as a wide product assortment and lower price. However, they believe that large stores lack in providing the necessary services. For instance, most participants complained about not being able to find help in the store when they need assistance. Although Polish consumers are annoyed by the lack of service components, they continuously shop at the large stores. Polish consumers learned to cope with the situation by using the trade-off approach. Polish consumers would continuously shop at a large store as long as the monetary benefit of shopping at a large store is greater than the consequences of perceived poor service. Comm and Palachek (1978) investigated the effects of various length of waiting times on individuals' regret time levels in grocery store waiting lines. Findings indicate that individuals with high regret levels in long waiting lines would buy fewer groceries at the present store, switch grocery stores in the future and shop at off-peak hours. However, these same individuals also indicated that they would not switch grocery stores in the future if they were given reasonable discount on their groceries or anticipated the long wait before entering the store. Those who prefer to shop at small stores were willing to trade off the small product assortment and higher price with better customer service. Polish consumers seem to pay more attention to service-related attributes in the small stores because of the nature of relationships between sellers and customers is rather personalized and customized due to the frequent visits. Although Polish consumers may not have emphasized the importance of store-related attributes in the interviews, it was evident that their purchase decision was directly and indirectly influenced by the store related attributes such as crowdedness, price labeling, visual display, and store hours.

## Discussion of the Findings on the "Influence of the Past Retail Experience in the Polish Consumers' Patronage and Consumption Behavior"

Polish consumers may have quickly adapted the new retail environment but it will take longer to change their attitudes and behaviors, which have been conditioned with the retail experience of the past. Table 5-3 presents the five emergent themes that reflect the influence of the past retail experience in the Polish consumers' consumption behavior.

### *Information Search Behavior*

Fukuyama (1995) views trust as the expectation of regular, honest, and cooperative behavior based on commonly shared norms and values. Rotter (1966) suggests that trust is one party's ability to rely on another's word or promise. It is not surprising that Polish consumers show a lack of trust toward any type of information sources provided by retailers. Polish consumers had no chance of building healthy and trusting relationships with retailers. Prior to privatization of the retail sector in Poland, stores were owned by the government and retailers had authoritarian power over Polish consumers. They were always in an extremely vulnerable position in the market and no reliable product or information sources were available.

**Table 5-3. Findings in the "Influence of the Past Retail Experience in the Polish Consumers' Consumption Behavior" by Research Topics**

| Topics | Emergent Themes |
|---|---|
| Information Search Behavior | 1. Lack of trustworthiness toward information sources |
| Patronage Behavior | 2. Impulsive purchasing behavior at the large stores<br>3. Unwillingness to change patronage behavior |
| Post-purchase Behavior | 4. Low expectation and high satisfaction<br>5. Passive "Voicing" action versus aggressive "Word-of-Mouth" |

Lewis and Weight (1981) argue that trust involves more than just forming a belief about another's trustworthiness; there must be a willingness to act based on those beliefs. Polish consumers have a great deal of doubt about the information provided by retailers. Polish consumers are aware that stores are owned by foreign companies, but they still view them as authoritarian figures. Retailers have not paid enough attention to how important it is to develop a trusting relationship with their customers. Due to the extremely hostile situation of the past, retailers may have to spend more time and effort to understand how trust develops and how the national culture impacts the trust-building process.

***Patronage Behavior***

Dietl (1993) argues that the planned economy system failed to develop a positive social model of consumption. For instance, persisting shortages accompanied by controlled prices intensified a feeling of unsatisfied consumer needs. During the extreme product shortage period, Polish consumers focused on finding the products rather than the search and evaluation of the quality, price, and value of products. Dietl (1993) also argues that the economics of shortages did not promote any rationalization in consumption behavior. The motive of purchasing a product was simply to possess the product whether it was defective or the use of the product was unknown. The uncertainty of product availability resulting from a constant product shortage during the planned economy, therefore influenced consumers to become irrational shoppers.

These experiences appear to have an impact on the Polish consumers' patronage behavior as it relates to the new retail environment. A number of participants reportedly engage in impulsive purchase when they shop at the large store. With no clear motives or objectives, some participants purchased products that appealed to them at the time. The consequence of impulse purchase is regret and guilt feelings about the purchase when they return home. Unfortunately, this irrational action is not easily reversed in the Polish market. It is not a common practice to return products to retailers just because a consumer changes his or her mind about the product. A few participants mentioned that they try to spend the least amount of time in a large store in order to prevent themselves from engaging in an impulse purchase.

Polish consumers seem to be trapped in the gap between the slowly changing mental conditions (i.e. habits and beliefs) and rapidly changing physical environment. Polish consumers may use the state of “unwillingness to change” as a defense mechanism to survive in the environment where things change too much too fast for them. Realizing that they have no control over the magnitude and speed of changes in society, they tend to secure their well-being as consumers by either ignoring the external information or justifying the goodness (value) of their habits and/or beliefs. For instance, findings indicate that Polish consumers are quite resistant to try out new products. They do not feel a need for searching for new products when they are satisfied with the present choices of products. However, few participants showed some evidence of having brand loyalty toward the traditional Polish brands as well as the internationally well-known brands. Interestingly, findings suggest that brand and/or manufacturing company may be used as the cue in choosing a new product. Assuming that the state of inertia is used to overcome vulnerability, building strong brand loyalty among Polish consumers may be a fundamental and crucial matter to the marketers.

***Postpurchase Behavior***

Polish consumers' retail satisfaction and complaint behavior appear to be highly influenced by their retail experience prior to 1989. Satisfaction is defined as the discrepancy between expectation and perceived performance in the disconfirmation paradigm. A decade later, Polish consumers still use their retail experience in the past as the reference point in evaluating the retail experience. Considering that expectation is formed based on the previous experience, the finding may not be unanticipated. Furthermore the findings suggest that the Polish consumers' retail experience in the past seems to have influenced the formation of the level of expectation, which is highly related to the current state of retail satisfaction.

Interestingly, participants compared their dissatisfactory shopping experience in the new retail environment with the rather depressing shopping experience of the past under the shortage economy. Perhaps they use their shopping experiences before the transition as the reference point to evaluate the current shopping experience. No matter the age group, all participants recited their own or parents shopping experiences prior to 1989. They consider anything and any condition better than what they previously experienced. It is interesting that even the younger generation, in their 20s, use their parents' experience as their reference point. The youngest participant in this study, a 20 year old female college student, recalls standing in a queue in front of a grocery store with her mother as a daily activity. She also said that her mother used to take her and her little brother to the shop because people used to yield their turn to mothers with young children.        .

All participants said that they are satisfied with their shopping experiences under the new retail environment, which offers more and better products, services, as well as retail outlets. Participants were extremely hesitant to say the word "dissatisfaction" even when they described a very unpleasant experience with retailers. Overall, participants used a "private voice" action to express frustration and negative feelings about their dissatisfactory retail experiences. Since there are several cost factors involved in complaining to either sellers or consumer organizations, an action of the negative word-of-mouth appears to be the most frequently used response to dissatisfactory experiences. A customer who does not complain to the firm when dissatisfied is of special concern to management for several reasons. First, the company loses the opportunity to remedy the problem and retain a customer (Hirschman, 1970). Second, the firm's reputation can be damaged from negative word-of-mouth actions taken by dissatisfied customers (Richins, 1983), resulting in the loss of potential and current customers. Finally, the firm is deprived of valuable feedback about the quality of its product or service (Fornell & Wernerfelt, 1987), impeding its ability to identify quality variances and make improvements. Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu, and Odabasi (1992) suggest that even though not directly observable from the firm's perspective, consumers' cognitive efforts to cope with dissatisfaction are important to the firm's retention efforts.

In general, participants were extremely reluctant to complain to retailers due to the costs involved in such action. While monetary cost was the most influential factor for Polish consumers to complain to retailers, emotional cost was the most significant reason not to complain to retailers especially about small purchases. Mainly female participants avoided having any confrontational situations with retailers. Stephens and Gwinner

(1998) suggest that consumers who perceive they have low coping potential and do not feel the balance of power in the marketplace favors them are likely to engage in emotion-focused coping strategies. According to Stephens et al. (1998), consumers using self-blame coping tactics that place responsibility for the dissatisfying marketplace experience on themselves. In some cases, consumers truly believe their disappointment is a result of their own action. Self-blame may be triggered by the fear that complaining will result in other people evaluating them negatively (Sorensen & Strahle, 1990). Lazarus (1976) explain that some consumers remain silent and engage in a coping strategy to attempt to regulate their mental response to the problem to feel better. Westbrook (1987) hypothesized consumers who feel they are responsible for a problem will feel guilt or shame and will not complain. In their silence, they may be engaging in the emotion-focused coping tactic of self-blame. Engaging in self-blame was common among the participants.

Andreason and Manning (1990) suggest that consumers who feel powerless do not believe there is anything they can do or say to change the situation. Findings indicate Polish consumers are easily discouraged to pursue further action when sellers are not willing to resolve the problem. In spite of the high education level of the participants, they have very low expectations about the seller and did not have any knowledge of a third party organization.

**Discussion of the Findings on the "Influence of the Time Perception in the Polish Consumers' Patronage and Consumption Behavior"**

The study of the impact of time as a variable in consumer behavior goes back to at least the early 1970s. Historically, time has been examined from economic, sociological, socio-psychological, and psychological perspective (see Hirschman, 1986). Within economics, time is primarily conceptualized as an objective quantity that has units of value possessed by individuals (e.g., Becker, 1965; Bryant & Wang, 1990; Umesh, Petti, & Bozman, 1989). As a component of price, the amount of time required to purchase, consume, and/or maintain the product has been studied both for the marketing of traditional goods and services (Faden, 1977; Fox, 1974; Hirschleifer, 1976; Hornik, 1982; Nichols & Fox, 1983) as well as in the context of social marketing (Fox, 1980). Analysis of the impact of time on consumers' behavior revealed implications for virtually all aspects of the consumer decision-making process and the marketing mix.

From the sociological perspective, time is a social construction based on the cultural context in which it is valued. The social-psychological perspective assumes that time uses represent indications of consumer lifestyle (Gross, 1987). Consumers do not consciously allocate their time in a planned and systematic fashion. Rather, they pursue their lifestyle and, in the process, assign time to various activities (see Lee & Ferber, 1977; Settle, Alreck, & Glasheen, 1979).

Graham (1981) proposes that a person's time perceptions are a function of the set of beliefs or standards shared by a group of people in any given time or situation. He points out that only a problem arises when a researcher assumes that all the subjects have the same perception of time, or that the subjects' perception is the same as the researcher's perception. Overall, participants mentioned the lack of time as the main reason for the shopping related activities (e.g., limited information search, passive complaint behavior, weekend shopping). It was evident that the time perception of Polish consumers has changed drastically during the last decade. While time had no monetary value under the socialistic, planned economy, it became a valuable and scarce resource under the free market economy. Due to the fact that Polish consumers are currently under the extremely competitive environment and work extended hours, they frequently engage in trading off time with higher monetary cost. Graham (1981) also argues that individuals are not limited to a single perception of time, but can switch from one perception to another depending on the task being performed.

Kelly (1973) found that most differences in time allocation could be explained by differences in resource availability measured along three dimensions: economic, temporal, and spatial. All consumer activity uses these aspects to varying degrees. For example, most participants were willing to suffer a higher monetary (economic) cost in order to purchase a number of basic items for dinner quickly (temporal) at the neighborhood (spatial) convenience food store instead of making a trip to large grocery stores which requires a higher temporal cost but a lower monetary cost.

Achabal, Kriewall, & McIntyre (1983) suggests that there are several aspects of time that must be considered in patronage behavior. They propose that the relative attraction of a store is in part dependent on the willingness of a consumer to reallocate some amount of time from another activity to that of shopping; for unless shopping is reviewed as an end in itself, consumers must trade off time against other non-temporally related store attributes and shopping against other potentially more desirable activities.

Some participants indicated that they considered a visit to large retail store as an activity that whole family can participate and enjoy together.

## Implications

### Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical standpoint, the most significant importance of this study emerges from the attempt to investigate consumption behavior of consumers in a transitional economy. The findings suggest several important avenues for the analysis of consumption behavior of consumers in a transitional economy. First, it presents not only the emergent themes that represent the attitudes and behaviors of Polish consumers in this study but also the significant factors (e.g., new retail environment, pre-transition experiences, time perception) that influence these responses. The research provides a theoretical foundation for better understanding of Polish consumers' attitudes and behaviors, which is beyond the descriptive information (e.g., what they buy, how much they buy, where they shop) presented by the previous studies.

While it was assumed that the changes in retail environment and retail experience in the past may have influenced the behavior of Polish consumers, an influential role of time perception was also observed from all aspects of consumption behavior of Polish consumers. Interestingly, time perception seems to influence all aspects of the retail experience from search behavior to post-purchase behavior while the early stage of consumption behavior, search behavior, was mainly influenced by the changes in retail environment and post-purchase behavior seems to be significantly influenced by the pre-transitional experience.

The significance of time perception in Polish consumers' consumption behavior suggests that the overall changes in the society and lifestyle have an impact on Polish consumers' consumption behavior. Graham (1981) suggests that there are different perceptions of time which are carried as part of culture, and that these perceptions have an impact on consumer behavior. By understanding the changes in a broader context, society rather than only retail context, we will be able to better understand Polish consumers' behavior.

One of the major changes occurred in the Polish retail environment is the availability of product information and existence of various information sources. However, it was uncertain how this change would influence the Polish consumers' search behavior. It was evident that Polish consumers engage in a limited search but it is not clear what causes them to behave in this manner other than the changes in retail environment and their time perception. It is worthwhile to further investigate factors and/or situations that may influence the Polish consumers' search behavior. The importance of understanding search behavior cannot be emphasized enough since it is the first step toward making the purchase decision.

Findings suggest that product category (i.e., grocery products versus big ticket items), price of product, previous product knowledge and time (location) of search (i.e., pre-store versus in-store) made a difference in Polish consumers' search behavior. Interestingly, a wide range of different in-store search behavior was reported and it indicates that Polish consumers are still in the experimenting phase of learning to shop in a new retail environment. It also indicates that Polish consumers' search behavior is in a vulnerable stage where it can be easily influenced by the external factors. Considering the

Polish market is in an infant stage of development, it is even more important to educate consumers to become a rational consumer who would seek for the best value that is available in the marketplace.

A prerequisite to all of the above attempts is to build a trust relationship between retailers and consumers. The finding indicates that those who had access to information and a full comprehension of the information still refuse to use the information because of lack of trustworthiness toward retailers. Consequently, Polish consumers are discouraged to search for information since they do not believe the information is either truthful or valid. This phenomenon is deeply rooted in the past experience during the era of planned economy. Building a trusting relationship is a time-consuming task in any kind of business relationship but it would be even more challenging when there is a long history of distrust due to the unbalanced power structure between retailers and consumers. Thus, it is very important to recognize trust as a construct that is significant in understanding Polish consumers' behavior.

One of the most significant changes in Polish consumers' shopping behavior was to combine their shopping activities at the large stores and the small stores. While Polish consumers maintain their tradition of shopping daily at the small neighborhood stores, they also shop at the large stores (e.g., supermarket, hypermarket). The distinctive basket of products purchased in each retail format represents the elements of Polish consumers' shopping habit, which is the need of honoring their tradition as well as the desire to explore and take advantage of the new market environment. Time and frequency of shopping is highly influenced by the time perception.

Impulsive shopping behavior is a habit that was inherited from the past. Although the nature of behavior may differ from the past, a basic notion of not having control over desire to purchase unplanned products remains the same. Polish consumers once purchase products based on availability not on necessity under the shortage economy. Under the new retail environment, Polish consumers are given total freedom to choose the product, the quantity, and the time of a given purchase. Impulsive shopping behavior among Polish consumers can be considered as a somewhat natural response to the drastic changes that occurred in the Polish market. However, it is notable that those consumers who admit their impulsive shopping behavior indicated that they purposely limit or eliminate their search behavior in the store to prevent them from engaging in further unplanned shopping. This finding has a significant implication in store layout and visual merchandise planning.

The overriding attitude in Polish consumers' purchasing behavior can be described as unwillingness to change. Although they made some visible changes in their consumption behavior, it is very evident that Polish consumers' behavior has not changed as fast as the retail environment has in the last decade. One of the reasons may be that Polish consumers fear the uncertainty in the new marketplace. This behavior is directly related to search behavior, especially search for new products. While Polish consumers indicated their unwillingness to change their purchase behavior, brand was the only factor mentioned as an important criterion for product selection.   It is interesting that the notion of "unwillingness to change" may actually contribute to simplify the set of criteria which influence the Polish consumers' purchase behavior.

It is important to identify what retail attributes matter to Polish consumers. Findings indicated Polish consumers formed multiple convenient orientations and different sets of retail attributes used in store selection. While product-related attributes and service-related attributes were frequently mentioned and emphasized in the comparison of different retail formats, they placed relatively little attention on store-related attributes. Time perception also plays an important role in forming convenient orientation. Although this study does not fully investigate the significance of each retail attribute it provides the groundwork for further investigation.

A relatively high level of satisfaction regard the Polish consumers' retail experience is due to the low level of expectation which is mainly based on the experiences during the shortage economy, not on the recent experiences under the new retail environment. This finding raises an issue of determining which factors influence the formation of an expectation toward a product and/or a retailer to Polish consumers. One can assume that a consumer uses the latest and the best experience they had in order to update their expectation level.

Although Polish consumers' purchasing behavior changed drastically due to the changes in the retail environment and in society, they seem yet to overcome the imbalanced power structure in the marketplace. Most Polish consumers do not engage in complaint behavior in order to avoid any type of confrontational situation. Prior to 1989, Polish consumers were not aware of a possibility of returning products because they were not allowed to do so. In fact, they would not return products despite the condition of the products after investing so much time and effort by queuing up in front of the store. It appears that these experiences dominantly influence Polish consumers' complaint behavior in the current retail environment. Researchers must keep in mind that the consumers in developing nations are passive and unorganized and have relatively little information regarding market conditions, prices, quality, or health regulations related to products. Even if the consumers are aware of problems, they do not know where and/or how to complain. However, they use the negative word of mouth as a form or voicing their problems and frustrations to their friends and family members. This finding has an important theoretical implication on the investigation of the channel of communications used by Polish consumers.

Limited store search behavior is another example of a passive attitude toward solving problems in the post-consumption stage. This behavior can be explained by the choice of store being strictly influenced by the location of stores due to constraints in transportation methods. Time perception also appears to have an impact on Polish consumers' store switching behavior. For instance, most participants patronized the nearest stores, both small and large stores, because of the convenience of shopping as quickly as possible. For small stores, there are three to five stores from which to choose from however only one large store that can be reached within 15-30 minutes. This retail environment does not leave many options to Polish consumers who are under high-time pressures and with limited transportation methods.

### Managerial Implications

There have been significant changes in the Eastern European retail structure and market strategy. Dietl (1993) suggested that consumers adapted themselves to the market regulation much faster than expected and a large part of the society already forgot that a constraint on the part of supply existed in the process of choice and purchase. In this study, Polish retail structure and practice is depicted in the view of the consumer. Intensive competition in the Polish retail market appears to be evident and some experts claim that it has reached the saturation stage. However, retailers have been less concerned with genuinely listening to consumers' needs and desires. One can say that consumers had to adapt to changes being made in the market environment and they changed their shopping behavior accordingly. For example, the Polish consumers now shop daily and weekly, using a car for weekly shopping, and buying large purchases. These findings indicate that retailers should investigate the Polish consumers' behaviors and attitudes, not just their activities, in order to better understand the reasons behind the consumer behavior when developing a retail strategy.

In the dynamic global environment of today, understanding how consumers acquire information is important at the micro level for marketing management decisions (Srinivasan, 1986). Search is a method by which consumers both develop a set of alternatives for consideration and make a choice among these considered alternatives. Search models, through their explicit representation of consumer choice as an information gathering, evaluation, and decision process, have great potential for guiding managerial and public sector actions in the consumer market. Since search is a key aspect of the consumer decision process, understanding the search behavior is important for explaining and predicting consumer patronage patterns and developing competitive strategies and consumer policy.

For marketing managers, understanding information search determinants is crucial for designing effective marketing communication campaigns because

"Information search represents the primary stage at which marketing can provide information and influence consumers' decisions" (Wilki & Dickson, 1985, p.85). In addition, consumer information search is important for managerial decisions. Because the ability to search is intrinsic, managers can choose to lower search costs or increase benefits of search, which will increase consumers' motivation to search.

Given that Polish consumers desire more than a wide variety of products, a better understanding of the consumption culture can help global retailers to design better, more effective retail strategies in the Polish market. Understanding the importance of retail attributes to Polish consumers may prove to be a valuable competition weapon for retailers. The findings showed that Polish consumers use different sets of retail attributes in evaluating different retail formats. For instance, a service related retail attribute may not be important for a large store but it may be the crucial factor for a small store. Dawson and Henley (2000) suggest that a key challenge for store management in Poland is creating a service oriented retail culture. Furthermore these findings indicate that retailers must understand the reasons behind how and why consumers desire service related attributes as well as what kind of service offerings.

In essence, the results have direct implications for merchandising and marketing strategies. Store layout decisions and product identification methods (labeling) relate to the issues of "convenience". Park, Iyer, and Smith (1989) found that consumers' store knowledge and the available shopping time affects many types of in-store shopping decisions. Easy entrance to store location and the store itself, access to and from sections of the store, and easily identifiable locations throughout the store would enhance the quality of consumers' shopping experience. In order to provide better service to those under high levels of perceived time pressure, "convenient" attributes such as extended store hours, addition of express checkouts and guaranteed number of checkout personnel at any given time should be incorporated into the strategy development. These approaches may attract new customers from other parts of the city beyond the proximity of the store.

The results of this study indicate that consumers may have formed more than one convenience orientation toward the shopping experience. For instance, consumers considered the proximity and quick and easy shopping as convenient for small stores while they perceived the one-stop shopping as a convenient factor for large stores. Moreover, the findings revealed that consumers have relatively low expectations on certain retail attributes for each retail format. For example, consumers did not expect to receive any form of customer service during shopping at the large store while they continuously patronized the small, neighborhood store in spite of the limited product assortment and high price range. Thus, this finding can guide managers to allocate resources accordingly in order to achieve the most effective outcomes.

One of the underlying managerial themes of this study is the importance of identifying the factors that lead dissatisfied consumers to exit silently rather than voicing their complaints. Unfortunately for retailers, unhappy customers often voice their displeasure in the form of negative word-of-mouth to other current and potential customers (Richins, 1983; Singh, 1988). Coping potential emerges as one important factor in the consumers' complaint decision. Firms that are able to increase a consumers' coping potential are in the best position to increase the number voicing their displeasure and thus have the opportunity to remedy the problem. Altering the perceived balance of power between the individual and the firm appears to be a key issue in increasing a consumers' coping potential.

The company should also be proactive in seeking feedback from customers. For instance, it is not enough to leave comment cards on a service desk. Using multiple channels of feedback (e.g., toll-free telephone numbers, consumer surveys, store intercept interviews) may encourage the customer who may feel uncomfortable communicating directly with the firm. It is also very important that organizational promises for satisfaction be easy and painless for the customer to obtain. Communication would play a role in the shifting of power by articulating the exact steps necessary to enact these guarantees. Furthermore, steps consumers must take to receive redress cannot be overly burdensome. That is, customers who feel they must prove or justify their dissatisfaction will feel that the balance of power rests with the firm. Companies making complaint behavior simple will be more successful in shifting the balance of power.

Finally, the importance and benefits of trust in the global business environment highlight the need for understanding how trust develops and the way the national culture impacts the trust-building process. Given that building the trust relationships between consumers and retailers are crucial to sustaining a long-term relationship, it is important to understand how trust influences specific aspects of customer behavior.

## Directions for Future Research

The analysis and discussion reveal a number of important directions for future research. Although all of these issues are intriguing, some issues should be given priority over others. One obvious need for future research is the replication of the study on consumers in other parts of Poland. It is important to be aware of socio-economic structure and assume that not all Polish consumer segments are similar in their consumption behavior. It would be necessary to investigate Polish consumers in other regions to achieve a better representation of Polish consumers. For instance, consumers of Warsaw, the nation's capital, experienced the most rapid development in the retail sector, therefore consumers shopping habits may be different from those in Krakaw. In addition, the constantly evolving society and market environment poses challenges to traditional "one time" customer research techniques. Instead, researchers need to continually survey and observe the Polish consumers to stay ahead of the shift in consumption behavior.

In order to carry out these studies, alternative types of research are needed in investigating the unknown group of consumers before utilizing the measures that have been developed and tested in different sets of consumers (e.g., North American consumers). While quantitative research may cost less and save time, the results could be misleading due to the lack of validation of the measurement in that particular cultural setting. Researchers should make greater use of anthropological research methods such as participant observation and ethnography to supplement traditional interviewing and survey approaches.

There are several research topics to be further investigated regarding Polish consumers' search behavior. The first area is to examine the effectiveness of retailer's advertising/promotion campaigns in the Polish market. In particular, what style and type of advertising appeals to Polish consumers? Currently, large retailers appear to focus on printed adverting (e.g., leaflet, billboard) as their choice of advertising tools. However, findings of this study indicate that Polish consumers pay little attention to information sources prior to visiting the store. Pietras (2001) found that information about the scarcity or unavailability of products was the most influential source. This result may be related to their long-lasting experience with the difficult period of the “shortage economy” in the 1980s, which led Polish consumers to become more sensitive to any scarcity. It would be useful to understand how the various information sources may or may not influence the Polish consumers’ purchase decision.

Additional research is needed to investigate the Polish consumers’ in-store shopping behavior in order to gain better understanding of effectiveness of promotional display and store layout. This research may provide interesting implications for researchers and practitioners on how to plan the store layout as well as how to select the location for the promotional displays in the store. It should also capture valuable information on how Polish consumers search for new products in the store. The in-store observation method would be most appropriate for this type of research.

It would be also worthwhile to identify the factors that may influence the degree of search activity engaged by Polish consumers. According to the findings of this study, Polish consumers engage in very limited search activity prior to the trip to grocery store while they tend to go through an extensive search for different product categories such as home appliances and electronics. An importance of understanding search behavior cannot be emphasized enough since the search process occurs in the early stage of the consumer decision process and its experience has an impact throughout the decision process as well as post-purchase responses. For instance, a consumer who carries out minimum search activity would have relatively low expectation on the product or service due to the lack of the comparison. Thus, the consumer may easily experience satisfaction. In contrast, a consumer who engages in an extensive search activity would form a set of comparison criteria to evaluate the product and/or service. In this case, a relatively high expectation can be formed and consequently satisfaction may be achieved with equally high performance as the expectation.

In terms of purchase behavior, the influence of time perception on purchase behavior needs further investigation due to the fact that time becomes more and more scarce as Polish society is rapidly transforming into a modernized and westernized place. Much of the time perception research in retail/consumer behavior literature examined the influence of time perception upon an isolated situation, such as queuing and store choice. An interesting question concerns how time perception may influence overall consumption behavior and may add new dimensions to the typology of shoppers. Considering the difficulty to understand the effect of various time perceptions, an appropriate measurement must be developed to identify the existing time perceptions among Polish consumers.

The importance of conceptualization of retail satisfaction lies in understanding all of the components of the total retail experience and how these components are related to each other. In particular, further research is necessary to investigate the factors that contribute to forming the Polish consumers' expectation in their retail experiences. In addition, it would be worthwhile to identify a set of criteria used by Polish consumers to evaluate their retail experience.

It would also be useful to understand how the satisfaction responses influence other post-purchase behaviors such as repurchase intention, switching behaviors, and word-of-mouth activities. Special attention must be given to the investigation of word-of-mouth activity during the post-consumption period. It will provide a better understanding of the use of communication channels after the purchase is completed. In order to develop a strategy to communicate more effectively with Polish consumers, it is essential to investigate the influential factors that are currently affecting the Polish consumers' complaint behavior.

Finally, the research effort as a whole demonstrates that much more attention needs to be made in understanding the behavior of consumers in the transitional economy. Findings and the related discussions indicate how much the past retail experience influences the Polish consumers' present consumption behavior. It is an important finding that guides researchers to further investigate the market conditions and consumers' retail experiences under the planned economy. Without having a comprehensive examination of consumers' retail experience in the past it would be nearly impossible to gain an in-depth understanding of their consumption behavior under market economy. It is not to claim that the countries in transition should be treated in the same manner, but to acknowledge that they shared common differences from those in the Western world.

## Limitations

This research is not free of shortcomings and limitations. The limitations involve mainly methodological issues and analysis strategy due to the nature of this study that investigates consumers in a foreign country using the qualitative research method.

In terms of methodological limitations, some naturalistic consumer researchers would argue that the period of four months is not long enough to collect the proper amount of data using qualitative data collection. Although the length of investigation was pre-determined, the saturation stage was reached in data collection before the field trip was completed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain naturalistic sampling is based on informational, not statistical, considerations. If the purpose is to maximize the information, then sample size is determined by informational redundancy, not a statistical confidence level.

Another potential methodological limitation is the accuracy of information on the pre-transition period obtained from participants. Research was conducted during one period of time during the transitional period, thus any comparisons made to the pre-transition period are based on consumer recollections and are corroborated by various written records. Since the study is not longitudinal, it is possible that the detailed consumption activities under the planned economy were actually somewhat different from what this research suggests.

Another potential limitation is related to the method used to assess the quality of data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the member check is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility. In this study, three member checks were conducted with three participants. Members were selected not randomly but upon their willingness to participate in the process. Thus, three members may not have been a sufficient representation of participants. By distributing the report (Chapter 4) via electronic mail due to the time constraint, thus participants who do not have access to Internet or did not have an e-mail account were not be able to participate in this process.

Several issues related to the researcher bias also present potential limitations. First, the primary researcher did not have any understanding of the Polish language at the time of investigation. Although primary data collection was conducted either in English or in Polish with the assistance of interpreters, one can argue that there is a possibility of missing the true meaning of the data. Second, the gender of the researcher may have influenced the gender composition of participants. The majority of the participants were female and it was easier to recruit female participants than male ones. It appeared that female participants were more comfortable in conversing with the researcher being female than male participants. Third, the perceived identity of the researcher may have influenced the willingness of participating in the study. Most people who were approached for the study perceived the researcher as an American based on the ability of speaking fluent English and attending a University in the United States. In fact, the researcher was born and raised in South Korea and was enrolled in higher education for a number of years in the U.S. It appeared that the perceived identity of researcher as an American had a positive influence on recruiting participants. Interestingly, the researcher's true identity, South Korean, also played a positive role in this process since South Korea has a positive image among the Polish people due to the heavy investment in the automobile industry in Poland.

## Conclusion

An investigation of Polish consumers' retail experience during the first decade of the political and economic transition (1989-2000) was conducted. Given the original research questions posed, the primary conclusion from this research is that Polish consumers' shopping behavior as well as consumption behavior have been influenced by the dramatic changes in the retail environment, retail experiences in the past, and time perception. The data provide rich evidence not only of the Polish consumers' daily shopping activity but also their beliefs and attitudes behind their actions. The choice of the research method, qualitative method with naturalistic inquiry, enables one to obtain insightful information, which presents the Polish consumers' point of view on their retail experiences.

This research represents a contribution to the body of knowledge by taking a significant step and addressing several untapped issues. Due to the lack of attention directed to the behavior of consumers in the former planned economies, it is simply unknown that how they may or may not adapt to the role of consumer in a highly competitive and modernized market environment. Consumers in these countries should be treated differently from those of so called "developing countries".

One of the overriding findings of this study was that Polish consumers' retail experiences in the past had a significant influence on their current retail experience. Douglas and Craig (1995) highlight the need to conduct market research into consumer behavior to find out the best way to enter non-domestic markets effectively. It remains that a stream of research needs to follow in order to better understand the vast group of consumers whom do not share the same past retail experiences with consumers in the Western world (e.g., Western Europe, North America).

For practitioners, this research highlighted the need for better understanding of consumers in countries undergoing political and economic transition. While it was relatively simple to get consumers' attention by simply presenting a wide selection of products from overseas at the beginning of the transition, consumers are becoming more and more sophisticated and educated with the western way of consumption. For instance, Polish consumers may put very little value on store policies (e.g., return policy) at this point, but it might not be too long before they pay more attention to service related retailer attributes.

As some experts already claimed, the retail sector in the Polish market is already saturated for the time being. It would be crucial that retailers identify and strengthen their competitive advantage to sustain their success in the Polish market. Understanding consumers, in particular how their behavior may or may not change would be very valuable to retail managers to formulate the most effective and efficient retail strategies that provide promising performance. Retailers must educate and encourage consumers to communicate with them regarding their thoughts on both positive and negative experiences. The resolutions of problems can be more likely found in the consumers' thoughts behind their action and shopping behavior. As the findings of this study support the importance of understanding consumers' behavior, retailers should start listening to what their target market has to say to them instead of suggesting to their consumers what they need to know.

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## VITA

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