Brady et al.'s (2005) Service Evaluation Models: A Replication and Extension in China

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Abstract

The research described in this study replicates and extends the Brady *et al.,* [Brady, M. K., Knight, G. A., Cronin Jr. J. Toma, G., Hult, M. and Keillor, B. D. (2005), emoving the Contextual Lens: A Multinational, Mult-setting Comparison of Service Evaluation Models, *Journal of Retailing,* 81(3), pp. 215-230] study suggestion that future research in service evaluations should focus on emerging service economies such as China. The intent of the research was to examine the suitability of the models suggested by Brady and colleagues in the Chinese market. The replication somewhat successfully duplicated their finding as to the superiority of the comprehensive service evaluation model. Additionally, we also sought to examine as to whether the service evaluation model is gender invariant. Our findings indicate that there are significant differences between gender. These findings are discussed relative to the limitations associated with the study.

Keywords: *service evaluation models, China, Gender, Service Quality.*

Introduction

Without a doubt services' marketing is a well researched subject (Fisk et al. 1993). Within this body of research, the service quality construct occupies a central position. In particular, academics and practitioners alike have exhibited considerable interest in the issues that surround the measurement of service quality, the conceptualisation of the relationship between service quality and its antecedents and consequences. Most recently, researchers have concluded that a critical focus of service research to date is the identification and study of those factors that "drive" consumers' service purchases. The list of factors is growing, but five factors are particularly prevalent: sacrifice, service quality, service value, customer satisfaction, and behavioural intentions (e.g., Anderson et al. 1994; Cronin and Taylor 1992; Parasuraman et al. 1988; Zeithaml 1988; Zeithaml et al. 1996). These constructs have been studied individually, but are more often depicted in subsets or models of service evaluation processes (e.g., Fornell et al. 1996; Heskett et al. 1994). More recently, however, researchers have examined the interrelationships between these constructs simultaneously (e.g. Athanassopoulos 2000; Bolton and Drew 1991; Chenet et al. 1999; Cronin et al. 2000; Brady et al. 2005). One recent comprehensive inquiry into service evaluation was carried out by Brady et al. (2005). Brady and colleagues identified four service evaluation models that are commonly offered to explain the relationships amongst the above-mentioned constructs. They simultaneously tested these models using samples of service consumers in a number of countries across varied temporal and service settings. The results of this comparative analysis revealed relationships between the constructs in question.

Although the volume of services marketing research is considerable, it has been observed that the majority of work has concentrated on developed market economies. Developing nations around the world are home to a large proportion of tomorrow's potential consumers and ignoring them is a luxury that both academics and practitioners can ill afford. In this context, a number of authors (Brady et al. 2005) contend that future research should focus on emerging service economies. These authors argue that in countries such as China (PRC) and Russia, unprecedented opportunities may exist to investigate how cognitive processing of services evolves in the wake of a transformation to market-based economies, which includes

increased consumption experience, emergent entrepreneurial activities, and other such variables. Filling this void is one of the objectives of this research. Therefore, it is proposed that this study will be based on the PRC consumers. PRC represents a significantly different cultural market than that offered by much of today's service encounter research (cf. Hofstede 1980). As alluded to earlier, researchers are beginning to appreciate the importance of examining service evaluation in a more holistic manner by incorporating all the important drivers in single models. Our objective is to take a similar approach, and embark on a comparative examination of Brady et al.'s (2005) service evaluation models with PRC consumers.

A fuller understanding of service evaluation models and further advancement of service quality research as an academic discipline requires that the validity of models developed for group of consumers be examined among different consumers. A key concern in extending theories and their associated constructs to consumers is whether the instruments designed to measure the relevant constructs are gender invariant. This is based upon recent work that has shown differences in shopping evaluation models based upon gender (Hart, Farrell, Stachow, Reed and Cadogan 2007). This becomes our second objective. We seek to examine any differences in the tested models by using gender as a control variable.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The following section will provide background information on the constructs under examination in this study. The research methodology will be detailed in the subsequent section. Section three presents the results of the research. Finally, the paper will conclude with discussion of study outcomes and their implications for management practice, limitations of the study, and directions for additional research.

Conceptual framework

In expounding service evaluation models, many researchers rely on attitude theory for theoretical support. One of the goals of attitude theory is to determine how attitudes drive intentions. Among the numerous schools of thought on attitudes, the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980) is perhaps the most prominent contemporary attitude theory. The theory of reasoned action postulates that intentions are the direct outcome of attitudes, subjective norms and beliefs, such that there are no intervening mechanisms between the attitude and the intention. Most service evaluation models specify a single variable that leads to behavioural intentions and that also acts as an intervening variable for the effects of the other constructs in the model (Fornell et al. 1996). Such a model specifies satisfaction as a central mediating variable such that the effects of service quality, sacrifice, and value on behavioural intentions are mediated by satisfaction. The rationale for the model is that since satisfaction is primarily an affective variable whereas quality and value are cognitive evaluations (Oliver 1997), a direct link to intentions is justified by theoretical models that specify a cognition-affect causal ordering (e.g., Bagozzi 1992; Lazarus 1991). In effect, satisfaction is positioned as an affective-oriented mediator that follows from quality and value evaluations.

Until recently, the aforementioned service evaluation model tended to be parsimonious in terms of the relationships leading to behavioural intentions, but this view has been challenged recently (Cronin et al. 2000). Cronin and colleagues' primary point of contention in service evaluation models is whether satisfaction directly affects behavioural intentions and if so is it the only direct effect, as is specified in the satisfaction model. Indeed, there are competing service evaluation models that specify value as the central construct so that all paths to behavioural intentions are mediated by value. These value-centric models appear in the value

literature (e.g., Chang and Wildt 1994; Grewal et al. 1998) and contend that value is the sole direct determinant of behavioural intentions. There are also models in the service quality literature that position service quality in the central mediating role (e.g., Zeithaml et al. 1996). The direct effects of value and service quality in the latter two models are theoretically justified with attitude theory (e.g., Fishbein and Ajzen 1975), since value and service quality are similar to an attitude (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1985) and attitude theory suggests a direct link between attitude and intentions.

Brady et al. (2005), in their comparative examination of service evaluation models, identify four competing service evaluation models that are commonly used to depict antecedents to behavioural intentions. The authors named the models according to their specifications and according to the literatures in which they are encountered.

The 'value' model is so called because it positions value as the central mediating construct. This model is very similar to the service evaluation models that appear in the value literature, i.e. that service value is determined by the difference between gains and losses, or, in the case of services, the difference between service quality and sacrifice (Sirohi et al. 1998; Sweeney et al. 1999; Wakefield and Barnes 1996). Both sacrifice and service quality are antecedents to value; however the former acts as the 'loss' side and the latter acts as the 'gain' side of the value integration.
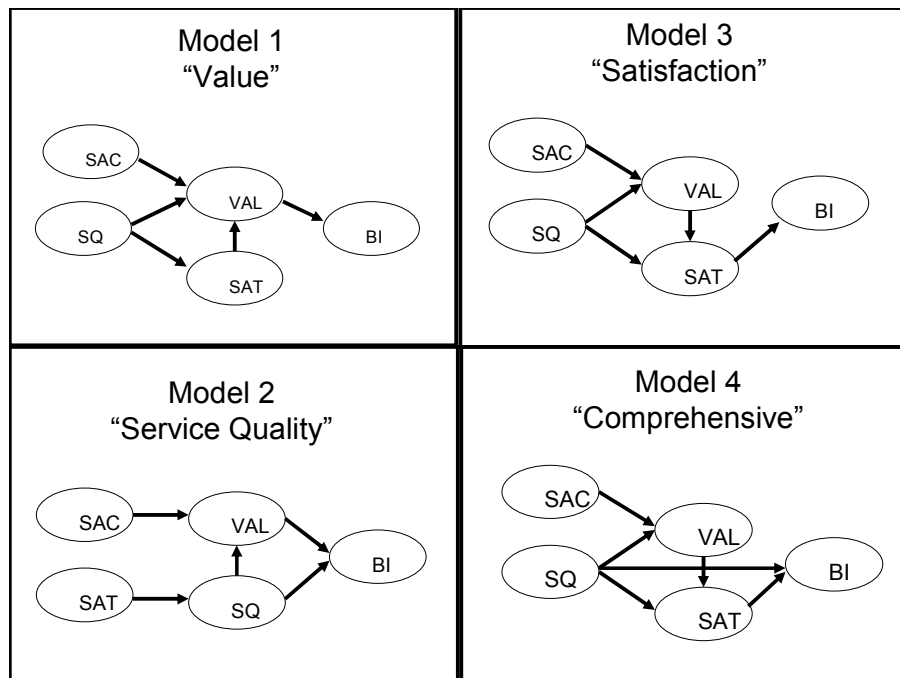
Descriptions. SAC: Sacrifice; SQ: Service Quality; SAT: Satisfaction, VAL: Value; BI: Behavioural Intentions.

Figure 1: Four Service Evaluation Models, Brady et al., (2005)

The model where service quality is the central driver of behavioural intentions is termed the 'service quality' model. Here satisfaction is specified as an antecedent to service quality based on the premise that service quality is a general evaluation similar to an attitude, and therefore is superordinate to satisfaction (Brady et al. 2005). This model is similar to the service

evaluation models identified in the service quality literature (e.g., Athanassopoulos 2000; Boulding et al. 1993; Lee and Cunningham 2001; Zeithaml et al. 1996).

The third conceptualisation is the 'satisfaction' model. Here satisfaction is positioned as the key determinant of behavioural intentions (e.g., Anderson and Fornell 1994; Andreassen 1998; Clow and Beisel 1995; Fornell et al. 1996; Hallowell 1996; Heskett et al. 1994; Mohr and Bitner 1995). This model is also drawn from other service evaluation models. However, this service evaluation model subscribes to the appraisal-response-coping sequence (Lazarus 1991) or the cognitive-emotive causal order (Oliver 1997), which position satisfaction as a consequence of service quality.

Lastly, Brady et al. (2005) identified the 'comprehensive' model. In specifying the comprehensive model they incorporate Bagozzi's (1992) observations on refining attitude theory to consider intervening mechanisms that may better explain intentions. Bagozzi (1992) challenged the prevailing perspective in attitude theories that intentions are the direct outcome of attitude (and subjective norms) such that there are no intervening mechanisms between the attitude and the intention. The suggestion is that there may be other potential links to intentions that are not included in the theory of reasoned action (Bagozzi 1992). More specifically, the comprehensive model specifies that service quality, service value, and satisfaction are all directly related to behavioural intentions and is therefore similar to service evaluation models that specify multiple direct links to behavioural intentions (e.g., Anderson and Sullivan 1993; Cronin et al. 2000). It is comprehensive in the sense that all three antecedents (service quality, value, and satisfaction) are suggested to influence behavioural intentions directly and jointly.

Research methodology
Data collection

Shenyang was selected as the setting for the study. Shenyang is the provincial capital of Liaoning, a large urban conurbation with a population 8,000,000. According to the Chinese National Statistics Department (2005), the average Shenyang resident's income is 9150 RMB per year (approximately USD $1150 - $1200) placing it 14th out of a total of 23 provincial capital cities in China. Therefore, the sample is drawn from an average city in China with average incomes, theoretically representing the average Chinese consumer. Questionnaire respondents were selected through random interception of shoppers at two large supermarkets in Shenyang. Through this process two hundred and eighty three useable questionnaire were collected.

Questionnaire and scale development

The questionnaire was prepared via back-translation (e.g., firstly prepared in English and translated into Chinese by one of the authors; secondly, translated from Chinese back to English by a different colleague fluent in both languages). The authors and the translator then resolved translation discrepancies in a face-to-face meeting. The questionnaire was pre-tested. Eighteen pilot interviews were conducted with shoppers. Their comments and suggestions for improvement were used to revise the survey. A nine point Likert-type response format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was used for all indicators. Brady et al (2005) suggests that this approach is more successful in maximising respondent specificity compared to the more commonly used five or seven response format.

Scale items for sacrifice, service quality, service value, customer satisfaction, and behavioural intentions are taken from previous work (Brady et al. 2005; Cronin et al. 2000). Upon

collection of data, all scales were subjected to a purification process. This involved recommended assessments of dimensionality, reliability, and validity (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). The first data analytical stage consisted of an exploratory principal axis factoring of all constructs of interest. This resulted in the first deletions of poorly performing items from the scales based on weak or cross-loadings. The fit indices chosen in Table 1 were used because a combination of such indices has been shown to achieve a good balance between Type I and Type II error rates when assessing model fit (Hu and Bentler 1999).

In assessing reliability and validity of the model a confirmatory factor analysis (hereafter CFA) using LISREL8.7 was conducted. We followed the two-step method recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). To assess model fit, a covariance matrix was created as suggested by Jöreskog and Sörbom (2002). Before the data was subjected to the CFA, three modifications to the data were made in SPSS. First, the "do not know" answers were coded to missing values. Second, the missing values were estimated with the expectation-maximisation (EM) method (Dempster et al. 1977). Third, the resulting data was recoded into integers.

Results of CFA Analysis				Sample Demographics		
	Our study	Brady Study			Our study	Brady Study
n	273	1138		Age		
chi square	216.624	570.0		<21	42.3	5.8
df	80	80		21-30	34.9	60.5
CFI	0.97	0.97		31-40	13.2	19.6
RMSEA	0.07	0.07		41-50	7.1	9.1
				>50	2.5	5.0
Service Quality (SQ 4 items)						
Composite Reliability	0.77	0.90		Gender		
Average variance extracted	0.64	0.70		Gender		
Parameter estimates range	.60-.75	.81-.87		Male	33.1	50.40
				Female	66.9	49.60
Satisfaction (SAT 3items)						
Composite Reliability	0.86	0.94				
Average variance extracted	0.67	0.84				
Parameter estimates range	.77-.86	.86-.96				
Value (VAL 3items)						
Composite Reliability	0.76	0.93				
Average variance extracted	0.61	0.82				
Parameter estimates range	.64-.78	.85-.91				
Scrifice (SAC 2items)						
Composite Reliability	0.97	0.77				
Average variance extracted	0.67	0.63				
Parameter estimates range	.68-.72	.77-.81				
Behaviroual Intentions (BI 3items)						
Composite Reliability	0.88	0.92				
Average variance extracted	0.58	0.79				
Parameter estimates range	.73-.91	.75-.94				

Table 1: A comparison of Demographics and CFA analysis

There are various ways to test construct validity of a model. Although it is not strictly needed to test construct validity with separate tests if using covariance-based modelling like LISREL (Gefen et al. 2000) in which coefficients for factor loadings and paths also estimate the shared variance between latent constructs, the tests of both convergent and discriminant validity have become common among researchers. In LISREL construct validity is likely to occur if model fit indices like RMSEA meet the fit criteria. In covariance-based structural equation

modelling, construct validity is usually tested with an investigation of convergent and discriminant validity (Gefen et al. 2000). In general, convergent validity can be assessed by internal consistency validity by: 1) looking at the correlation among items which constitute a scale; 2) using scales that have been accepted, used and proven valid in the field by other researchers; and 3) looking at indicator loadings. In covariance-based structural equation modelling convergent validity is assessed by looking at the strength and significance of the item loadings and the suggested modification indexes. The indicators in the model loaded highly on their hypothesised variables and were significant. Another test of convergent validity involved an investigation of the average variance extracted (hereafter AVE) of the constructs. A model can be considered to have good convergent validity if at least 50 percent of measurement variance is captured by the construct (AVE > 0.5) (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The average variance extracted of all the constructs in the model exceeded the cut-off criteria and ranged from 0.60 to 0.91 indicating good convergent validity (see Table 1).

Internal consistency construct validity was assessed by calculating Cronbach's alpha for each the scales. The alphas for the study constructs ranged from .72 to .92 (see Table 1), which exceeds recommended thresholds (Nunnally 1978, p. 245).

To assess discriminant validity of the model, a procedure proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981) was adopted. They suggest assessing discriminant validity by investigating whether the AVE for the items is greater than their shared variance. That is, to examine whether the square root of the AVE for a given construct is greater than the absolute value of the standardised correlation of that construct with any other construct in the analysis. This cross-loading check showed that all items load higher on their intended construct than on other latent constructs. In other words, no large or significant correlation between any two constructs was found that exceeded the square root of the AVE of each construct. Thus, it can be concluded that the model has acceptable discriminant validity.

Model fit
The factor loadings of the latent variables are generally high and statistically significant, thus confirming that the indicator variables and their respective underlying constructs are all acceptable. Inspection of construct reliabilities reveals that the measurement model is reliable. Following Homburg and Pflesser (2000) we calculated composite reliabilities and AVE for scales. As discussed above, this resulted in values above the minimum recommended thresholds of 0.7 for composite reliability and coefficient alpha (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994), and 0.5 for AVE (Fornell and Larcker 1981) for all scales (see Table 1).

Table 1 compares the CFA results of our study with that of Brady et al.'s (2005) study. Both CFI and RMSEA values are remarkably similar. We then proceeded to test the four structural models using LISREL 8.7. Table 2 compares the SEM results of our study with that of Brady et al.'2 (2005) study. We too found that the path between service quality and value in the 'value' model was insignificant. Using the χ^2-difference test outlined by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the "comprehensive" model outperforms the other three models (smallest $\chi^2\_ = 10.05$, $df\_ = 2$, $p < .01$), followed by the "value" model, the "satisfaction" model, and the "service quality" model. However, in testing the 'comprehensive' model we found that the paths between service quality and behavioural intentions and between satisfaction and behavioural intentions were not significant.

Table 2: Comparison of SEM Results

Path	Our Study Loading	t-value	R^2			Brady Study Loading	t-value	R^2		
Value Model										
SAC --> VAL	0.32	3.39			Fit Indices	0.27	7.86			Fit Indices
SQ --> VAL	0.13	0.99*	0.74	(VAL)	$\chi^2 = 137.22$ df = 84	0.05	0.92*	0.52	(VAL)	$\chi^2 = 921.29$ df = 84
SQ --> SAT	0.7	6.61	0.49	(SAT)	CFI = .985	0.83	22.23	0.69	(SAT)	CFI = .94
Sat --> VAL	0.59	4.77	0.56	(BI)	RMSEA = 0.0483	0.52	9.78	0.56	(BI)	RMSEA = 0.09
VAL --> BI	0.75	7.31				0.75	20.12			
Service Quality Model										
SAC --> VAL	0.51	4.07			$\chi^2 = 143.73$ df = 84	0.38	10.13			$\chi^2 = 735.56$ df = 84
SQ --> VAL	0.46	4.19	0.67	(VAL)	CFI = 0.984	0.4	11.74	0.45	(VAL)	CFI = 0.96
SAT --> SQ	0.75	7.21	0.57	(SQ)	RMSEA = 0.051	0.84	22.24	0.71	(SQ)	RMSEA = 0.08
VAL --> BI	0.48	4.27	0.54	(BI)		0.45	14.14	0.64	(BI)	
SQ --> BI	0.31	2.97				0.45	13.78			
Satisfaction Model										
SAC --> VAL	0.43	3.83	0.71	(SAT)	$\chi^2 = 137.95$ df = 84	0.35	9.21	0.76	(SAT)	$\chi^2 = 775.01$ df = 84
SQ --> VAL	0.42	4.02	0.52	(VAL)	CFI = 0.985	0.39	11.11	0.41	(VAL)	CFI = 0.95
VAL --> SAT	0.57	4.79	0.52	(BI)	RMSEA = 0.049	0.29	11.49	0.60	(BI)	RMSEA = 0.049
SQ --> SAT	0.36	3.67				0.67	19.16			
SAT --> BI	0.72	8.16				0.77	20.27			
Comprehensive Model										
SAC --> VAL	0.44	3.87				0.36	9.32			
SQ --> VAL	0.42	3.97	0.64	(SAT)	$\chi^2 = 124.17$ df =82	0.38	11.03	0.73	(SAT)	$\chi^2 = 594.46$ df =82
SQ --> SAT	0.36	3.57	0.52	(VAL)	CFI = 0.988	0.68	19.18	0.41	(VAL)	CFI = 0.96
VAL --> SAT	0.53	4.48	0.53	(BI)	RMSEA = 0.043	0.27	10.44	0.66	(BI)	RMSEA = 0.07
VAL --> BI	0.4	3.26				0.38	12.13			
SQ --> BI	0.17	1.76*				0.17	4.09			
SAT --> BI	0.25	1.88*				0.36	7.67			

* paths not significant at p<0.01, all other paths significant at p<0.01

Table 2: Comparison of SEM Results

Gender Invariance

Through measurement invariance we seek to evaluate whether, under different conditions of observing and studying phenomena, measurement operations yield measures of the same attribute (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998). More specifically, in testing for the invariance of the model across gender, we consider the equivalence of its structure with respect to three issues. First, that the number of underlying factors is equivalent. Second, that the pattern of factor loadings, including common cross-loadings, is equivalent. Finally, that the structural relations among the constructs in the model are equivalent. Although a variety of techniques have been used to assess various aspects of measurement equivalence, there is general consensus that the multigroup confirmatory analysis model represents the most powerful and versatile approach to testing measurement invariance (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998).

	χ^2	df	RMSEA	NNFI	CFI	GFI
Model 1						
Factor loadings free to vary across MALES						
AND FEMALES	555.25	177	0.124	0.878	0.897	0.808
Model 2						
Factor loadings forced to be equal across						
MALES AND FEMALES	581.6	187	0.124	0.88	0.893	0.788
Moving from Model 1 to Model 2:	**26.35**	**10**	**Equal**	**Better**	**Worse**	**Worse**

[χ^2 18.2, df. 10 @ p 0.05]

Table 3: Model Comparison Across Gender

The χ^2 difference test results are summarised in Table 3. We can observe that the change in χ^2 is significant, indicating that model 2 (where factor loadings were forced to be equal across males and females) is superior to model 1 (where factor loadings free to vary across males and females). This means that there is sufficient evidence to support the notion that the factor loadings for the male and female groups are different (i.e., that there are differences between male and female consumers when evaluating service models).

Discussion

We live in an increasingly service-oriented global economy. Against this background, an increasing number of service-oriented organisations are venturing into new markets around the globe. In this climate it has become very important to understand how consumers in different countries evaluate services that they receive. Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that most research tends to concentrate on developed economies. In this context, Brady et al.'s (2005) study of service evaluations across a variety of markets and contexts is a much-needed step. Our research sought to extend this body of work by testing Brady et al.'s (2005) four models in a developing economy, more specifically in the PRC.

The premise of a number of studies in this area (e.g., Brady et al. 2005; Cronin et al. 2000) was that direct antecedents of behavioural intentions require further investigation. These researchers argued that, as per the 'comprehensive' model, both service quality and values have a direct effect on behavioural intentions. Our work still leaves unresolved issues in this area. Our 'comprehensive' model displays the presence of two non significant paths. We found no support for direct effects between service quality and behavioural intentions and values and behavioural intentions, i.e. service quality and values are not direct antecedents of behavioural intentions with respect to Chinese consumers of services.

However, we did find that, in the PRC market, both service quality and service value lead to satisfaction. Thus, in addition to confirming Brady et al.'s (2005) findings, our results add weight to Bagozzi's (1992) suggestion that cognitive evaluations precede emotional responses. The results also provide empirical support for Woodruff's (1997) conceptualisation of value and satisfaction. From a managerial standpoint, this stresses the importance of value as a strategic objective and underscores the recent wave of research investigating the construct. In addition, the suggestion that service quality perceptions are also an important determinant of customer satisfaction is confirmed by our findings. Furthermore, our study reiterates the emerging empirical evidence for the collective role of the constructs investigated and of the manner in which they are related to each other.

In line with previous research (cf. Oliver 1997; Cronin et al. 2000) satisfaction emerged as a significant antecedent of behavioural intentions. This means that not only does satisfaction affect behavioural intentions directly, but it also operates as a key mediating variable, linking behavioural intentions to both value and service quality.

We found that value is a driver of behavioural intentions. Our findings give support to emerging evidence (Cronin et al. 2000; Brady et al. 2005) about the importance service consumers place on the value inherent in a service encounter. Value perceptions directly influence behavioural intentions. Additionally, value perceptions strongly affect customer satisfaction. This highlights the importance of value as a strategic objective for practitioners and justifies recent scholarly interest in the construct.

Our findings also highlight the importance of sacrifice. The theory that sacrifice is a key antecedent of value is strongly supported in all four models. This highlights that service providers must account for the significance of sacrifice in determining consumers' perceptions of value and satisfaction.

In addition to the direct effects, our models indicate indirect effects that service quality and service value have on consumers' behavioural intentions (i.e., service quality through service value and customer satisfaction and service value through customer satisfaction). This demonstrates that consumers' decision-making relative to their purchases of service products is a complex and comprehensive process. More specifically, the indirect paths indicate that models of consumer evaluation that consider only individual variables or direct effects are likely to result in incomplete and possibly misleading assessments. Thus, the service manager who only considers the likely effect of a service quality initiative on their customers' behavioural intentions is making a mistake if they do not also consider the impact of such a strategy on the value and satisfaction attributed to their firm's services. Similarly, an evaluation of the performance of value-added strategies should also incorporate the indirect effects such a strategy.

In examining the question, does gender have an influence on service evaluation, our research indicates that there is indeed a difference between male and female consumers. In services which supply very bespoke service products, say hair dressing for example, it is possible to cater to gender differences readily. However, can the management cater differences in gender a retailing environment?

Our findings demonstrate that relationships amongst constructs vary in differing national settings, which underlines the complexity of the service encounter. Therefore, in keeping with one of the key tenets of international marketing theory, it is imprudent to subscribe to the notion that customers behave similarly regardless of the national context. In line with previous research we have demonstrated the importance of service value and customer satisfaction. The implication of this is that, as Brady et al. (2005) suggest, promotion, pricing, location, service environment, personnel, operating hours, customer service policies, and all other strategic options should be evaluated based on their likely impact on consumers' value perceptions and customer satisfaction.

As with any research project, our study could have been improved. First, this study examined supermarket shoppers. The validity of the findings could have been strengthened had other types of service consumers been included in the sample data. In order to gain a deeper understanding of consumers in new markets, it would have been useful to consider potential moderators that could influence service evaluation models. While our study has demonstrated that new insights are possible by examining different markets, we urge that similar studies in other emerging markets, such as India, are undertaken to deepen our understanding of integrated decision-making models.

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