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**The Dynamics of Store Hour Changes and Consumption Behavior:  
Results of a Longitudinal Study of Consumer Attitudes toward Saturday  
Shopping in Germany**

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**Abstract**

Americans who travel internationally are often shocked to discover retail outlets closed during weekend and evening hours in cities such as Paris, Rome and Berlin. Fortunately, based on the implicit assumption that demand clearly exists, retailers at various locations throughout the globe have increased their hours of operation. While political debate regarding a variety of issues (costs, the rights of labor, religion, etc.) often rages, there has been an implicit assumption that latent demand for longer hours of operation exists.

Our study investigates through a longitudinal examination consumer perceptions of Saturday shopping in a country where such an activity was previously restricted. Specifically, we study perceptions of Saturday shopping among a sample of German college students who were raised with limited Saturday shopping hours. Data were gathered in 1996 – the year German legislation allowed expanded hours for retailers – and again in 1999, and comparisons are made. Strong differences are found between consumer attitudes towards Saturday shopping at the time of expansion and three years later, indicating the need for differentiating retail strategies in Germany and in other parts of the world that may soon be providing similar expanded retail access.

## Introduction

Unlike the broad hours of retail operation enjoyed by consumers in the U.S., establishments in many countries are only open for a limited number of hours and, in some instances, not at all on certain days. In short, shopping times available to consumers are restricted in many countries around the world. However, trends indicate that store hours have expanded in recent years, and that weekend shopping in particular is becoming a significant alternative to consumers as customer orientations become stronger and regulatory influences have diminished (*The Economist*, 1999; Kajalo, 1997; Grünhagen and Mittelstaedt, 2001; Roche and Orta, 1995). The decision to increase retail hours is a public policy initiative that can be examined in a variety of ways. Those who oppose it offer arguments for restricting hours of retail operation that include the encouragement of family ties, higher costs associated with expanded hours of operation, longer working periods for labor, favoritism for large business vis-à-vis small business, religious concerns, and potentially higher prices to consumers to offset the greater operational costs (Ingene, 1986; Gradus, 1996; Lovelock, 1994; Morrison and Newman, 1983; Tanguay *et al.*, 1995). Arguments supporting less restrictive hours include increased convenience for consumers, more efficient use of facilities (i.e., spreading fixed costs over more days), and an overall boost to employment and economic growth (Burke, 1995; Freathy and Sparks, 1995a, 1995b; Lambert, 1994; Tanguay *et al.*, 1995; Upton, 1986). While the public policy issues regarding longer hours of retail operation cannot be ignored, our focus in this article deals less with these issues and rests more on consumer response to improved shopping

opportunities.

Our primary goal in this paper is to compare how consumer perceptions of Saturday shopping developed over a three-year period in Germany in conjunction with relaxed restrictions regarding hours of retail operation. Store hours had been severely restricted in Germany since 1956. In the fall of 1996, German legislation was introduced that allowed retailers to expand their hours of operation during evenings and Saturdays, with expanded shopping on Saturdays being the most significant change.

In the past, store hour studies have been conducted either conceptually, asking the “what if” question (e.g., Elliott and Levin, 1987; Gradus, 1996; Grünhagen and Mittelstaedt, 2001; Kay and Morris, 1987; Moir, 1987; Tanguay *et al.*, 1995; Thurik, 1987), or historically, looking back in time at likely causalities between antecedents and outcomes (e.g., Kajalo, 1997; Laband and Heinbuch, 1987). The recent change of shop hour regulations in Germany has offered the timely opportunity to research the effects of store hour changes up close as they are occurring. To explore consumer perception of changing shopping opportunities, we conducted a survey-based study of German college students at the time of change and again, three years later. Student samples are often perceived to be convenient and over-used, yet the selection of a student sample for this study was purposeful. Young, college age people in Germany have grown up with limited chance to shop on Saturdays. Since our goal was to examine how consumers’ perceptions of Saturday shopping had changed over the three-year period immediately following the store hour expansion, it was logical to utilize a consumer segment that had not experienced such shopping opportunities previously.

Almost implicit in the discussion of the expansion of Saturday shopping opportunities is the assumption that consumers will be attracted by longer shopping times. This "Field of Dreams" philosophy ("stay open longer and the customers will come") may be overly optimistic. An earlier survey conducted of consumers in Germany on behalf of the government (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft, 1995) found that prior to the store hour expansion, only one-third of the respondents preferred extended weeknight hours, and just one-fifth preferred extended Saturday hours. Nearly 80 percent of the respondents indicated that they could do their shopping without major problems during the trading hours that existed at the time. Clearly, the convenience and "time utility" (Zikmund and d'Amico, 2001) of longer store hours were of little importance.

To study consumer response to expanded hours of operation, this paper first provides a review of the relevant literature regarding shopping hour preferences. Then, an overview of the store hour development in the U.S., Canada and the U.K. is offered, followed by a description of our study of German consumers. The results of our study are then discussed, and implications of our findings are offered.

## **Literature Review**

**Differences in Daily Preferences for Shopping** Traditionally, marketers have differentiated weekend from weekday shopping (e.g., Barnes, 1984; Elliott and Levin, 1987; Freathy and Sparks, 1995a, 1995b; Kay and Morris, 1987; Moir, 1987; Thurik, 1987; Varble, 1976). One explanation for this commonly found distinction might be that the "Sabbath as Day of Rest"

philosophy has fostered different expectations in terms of the "type" of shopping that is appropriate on different days.

Historically, an early emphasis in academic marketing studies was put on the economic “purpose” of shopping (Darden and Reynolds, 1971; Stone, 1954), while the social and recreational aspects of shopping were recognized later (Moschis, 1976; Tauber, 1972; Westbrook and Black, 1985). For example, Bellenger and Korgaonkar (1980) distinguished between functional-economic shopping and recreational shopping, the former being more purposive and the latter being more entertaining. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) revealed that consumption experiences can have hedonic qualities. Others (e.g., Babin *et al.*, 1994; Batra and Ahtola, 1991) have followed this typology and distinguish between utilitarian and hedonic shopping experiences.

Several recent studies have examined shopping as a source of entertainment (Jones, 1999; Kim, 2001), and hedonic consumption (Hopkinson and Pujari, 1999) as critical to retail success globally. In an examination of shopping motives Roy (1994) found a negative correlation (-.41) between functional-economic shopping orientations and the frequency of mall shopping, but a positive correlation (.34) between recreational shopping orientations and the frequency of mall shopping. The same research also determined that those who shopped on the weekend were more similar to holiday shoppers than those who were weekday shoppers. Similarly, Varble (1976) found Sunday shoppers to have recreational orientations.

Other research (East *et al.*, 1994; Roy, 1994) discovered that full-time workers were more likely to shop during early evenings and Saturdays. If one assumes that work responsibilities

limit weekday shopping opportunities, this finding might suggest that Saturday shopping is more task-oriented. It is likely, however, that every day finds both recreational and functional-economic shoppers in stores. For instance, a study by Barnes (1984) revealed that 55% of her sample were "serious" Sunday shoppers, 40% were "recreational" Sunday shoppers, and 5% were "anti-Sunday" shoppers. Recreational Sunday shoppers were likely to be female, middle-aged and married, while anti-Sunday shoppers were generally male and older. Research by Gentry *et al.*, (1997) found that U.S. college students were much more likely to shop on Saturdays than on Sundays, although shopping on Saturday was perceived to be much more stressful than the same activity on Sunday. Overall, most of the respondents in the study viewed shopping on weekends as a "necessary evil" rather than as an enjoyable pursuit. Saturday shopping involved a strong task orientation, while Sunday shopping was more recreational in nature.

In sum, then, there appears to be significant evidence that consumers do indeed exhibit different motives for shopping and that those motives are often manifested differently on different days of the weeks.

**Global Perspectives** To appreciate the dynamics of change that are (or are not) occurring in Germany with respect to longer store hours, it is perhaps relevant to examine global perspectives on the topic. The following provides a glimpse into the history and evolution of retail hours of operation in several countries that have experienced changes over the years.

**United States** The United States has a long tradition of restricting hours of commerce, limited largely to Blue Laws that can be traced to colonial times (Ingene, 1986). As late as the mid 50s,

nearly two thirds of the states had enacted some sort of store hour restriction. Since that time, many states have repealed their trading time regulations (Ingene, 1986; Laband and Heinbuch, 1987), yet local ordinances and laws continue to exist (Strum, 1993). The shift to extended store hours over the past three decades can be traced in part to changing residential patterns. When the population of the U.S. resided in downtown city districts, restricted trading times were not a significant impediment. In recent decades, however, people have moved away from the central city to suburbia and beyond, often resulting in long commutes to work and less time for shopping. Hence, retailers have expanded their trading times and extended closing hours to late at night. In many instances, retailers have even established 24-hour operations in order to facilitate shopping opportunities for their clientele (Blumenthal, 1994). Nevertheless, today's store hour regulations in the U.S. still include Sunday closings, perhaps as a result of pressure by religious groups claiming the sanctity of Sundays, or by labor organizations concerned about maintaining Sunday as a family day. While most state legislatures have generally permitted some Sunday trading, exceptions still remain. To ensure the ability of small retailers to compete with monopoly-seeking chain retailers, several states allow "Mom and Pop" grocers to remain open on Sundays while forcing the closing of all larger grocery stores (Ingene, 1986). Relatedly, in some locations orthodox Jewish communities have maintained Friday night and Saturday closings, with other religious groups or minority dominated areas enforcing similar traditional restrictions. Also, many communities, particularly in the more traditional Southern states, still uphold restrictions on liquor sales on Sundays.



**Canada** In Canada, the jurisdiction over weekday shopping hours rests with the individual provinces who, in turn, typically delegate the responsibility to individual municipalities (Morrison and Newman, 1983). The provincial legislatures usually establish a framework that stipulates the conditions under which the municipals must operate. An example from British Columbia indicates that Canadians have faced a situation not unlike that of the German consumers. Specifically, according to the British Columbia Municipal Act, all retail outlets should be closed after 6:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday, and after 9:00 p.m. on Thursday and Friday. Two reasons for the existence of these trading time limitations have been offered (Morrison and Newman, 1983): First, the restrictions reinforce close family ties by keeping shoppers and customers at home during evening hours. Second, the Canadian legislature appears to be concerned about the survival of small retailers. Notably, it is feared that the elimination of Blue Laws may result in a rapidly diminishing number of small and independent stores, as they would be unable to remain open longer hours in competition with mass merchandisers. Overall, provincial response to less restrictive retail laws has been quite varied. For example, some provinces have allowed retail stores to stay open on certain nights of the week only, while other provinces have permitted longer hours across the entire week (Tanguay *et al.*, 1995). Relatedly, in April of 1985, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the Lord's Day Act of 1907 that decreed that there was to be no shopping on Sunday (Gray, 1986), thus opening the way for Sunday retailing.

**United Kingdom** Blue Laws in the U.K. can be traced back many centuries to the Fairs and

Market Act of 1448. A variety of Blue Laws continued to exist until the first half of the twentieth century due to pressure from diverse interest groups including retailers, shopworkers, and religious organizations (Kay and Morris, 1987). For instance, in England and Wales laws once demanded that all shops (apart from certain specialty categories) must close by 8:00 p.m. on weekdays, with late closing (up to 9:00 p.m.) possible one day a week only. To offset that late closing, however, on another day of the week stores were required to close early, i.e., by 1:00 p.m. (Upton, 1986). In 1994, the Sunday Trading Act was established to protect store employees who work on Sundays (Halsall, 1994); it mandated at most six hours of trading by all retailers and specifically stated that an employee could not be terminated for refusal to work on Sundays (*International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 1994). In addition, various anomalies have existed in the U.K. over the years regarding Sunday shopping; for example, laws once allowed sales of gin and pornographic magazines, but prohibited consumers from purchasing powdered milk or the Bible. From 1950 to 1994, twenty separate attempts to reform store hour regulations were attempted and failed. Often, retailers would risk fines simply to remain open on Sundays to meet consumer needs. Finally, a compromise that involved small as well as large retailers was enacted. No longer were many store owners forced to pay fines simply to keep their shops open – a penalty they willingly accepted for two reasons: First, the store owners had little to lose, since the fines amounted to a sort of taxation. Second, the owners considered the consequent undermining of the legal status as the only way to put effective pressure on the legislature to lift the ban on Sunday trading (Freathy and Sparks, 1995a; Pressley, 1994). Apparently, their efforts succeeded.

In sum, the lessons offered by the examples of the U.S., Canada and the U.K. point to the fact that altering retail hours of operation is a complex matter. Even within Europe, however, the variability in store hours is great. Sweden abandoned regulation of trading hours in 1984 entirely, while Italy boasts a patchwork of closing times even today (Samiee, 1995). Laws, religious beliefs, and traditions interact to create a strong barrier to changes in commerce. Nevertheless, these same examples provide evidence that eventually the resistance to new retail opportunities erodes and a transformation of the marketplace does indeed occur. Recently, Germany has been in the midst of a radical change regarding retailers' hours of operation that make it possible to study the dynamics of consumer response and acceptance of expanded shopping hours up close. The following section details some of the factors and circumstances leading up to the changing retailing situation in the country and provides a backdrop for our research.

### **The Situation in Germany**

Despite the extension of trading times in 1996, German retail hours remain among the most restrictive in Europe (*The Economist*, 2001). Until that time, the store hour situation reflected a 1956 law that was originally established to protect employees and to regulate the exploding demand in the post-war German economy (Whitney, 1995). With the exception of convenience stores in railroad stations, airports or gas stations, no supermarket, bakery, boutique or department store was allowed to stay open past 6:30 p.m. on any weekday. On Saturdays, except for the four prior to Christmas and the first of every month, stores were required to close by 2:00 p.m., and shopping on Sundays was essentially prohibited (Burke, 1995; Whitney, 1995). There were, of course, exemptions allowed according to by-laws for certain categories of retail

stores that remained largely unregulated, such as corner and convenience stores, newsstands and pharmacies. In addition, hours varied in small towns, with many shops closing during lunchtime, opening very early (such as bakeries) or rather late (e.g., 10 a.m.).

In 1988, legislators voted to permit Thursday evening shopping, expanding store-hours from the previous 6:30 p.m. to an 8:30 p.m. closing time. However, in order to bring about such a change, it was necessary to overcome major resistance by shopkeepers and employees' unions through cutbacks on Saturday hours to appease store employees (Whitney, 1995).

Today, hours of operation are limited to 68.5 hours a week. The new legislation enacted in 1996 extended trading times by one and a half hours during weeknights to 8:00 p.m., and by two hours to 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Even so, attempts were made by some mass merchandisers, particularly in the Eastern states, to circumvent existing Sunday closing laws by declaring entire store assortments, including kettles and CD players, to be souvenirs – a genre of products and retailing that were given special Sunday dispensation (*The Economist*, 1999). Not surprisingly, such attempts to trade on Sundays have generated severe penalties by the courts, and the justice department has announced that retail outlets are likely to remain closed to the German consumer on Sundays well into the future (*The Economist*, 2000). Thus, in an international comparison, Germany still remains among those countries with the most restrictive limitations regarding its closing times. Only recently, other mainstays of the anachronistic German web of retail regulations were repealed, among them the 1932 Law on Free Gifts and the 1933 Discount Law (Simonian, 2001). Meanwhile, debate continues over the efficacy of Sunday shopping.

Beyond Germany, Europeans view Sundays as days for family activities and rest in general, and the opening of stores is likely to be viewed as an intrusion into that sacred domain if not handled carefully. Certain types of weekend activities such as gardening and home repairs, however, have generated interest in the U.S. and other places for particular types of retailing (i.e., home improvement and hardware stores) on Sundays (Lambert, 1994). Perhaps, promotion of

such complementary retail outlets might be better received as Sunday shopping options in Germany than more radical departures from current lifestyles, such as non-family oriented recreational shopping establishments.

## **The Study**

The purpose of our investigation was one of discovery rather than theory testing. Specifically, the general research questions that we attempted to answer in our exploratory study were: did young German consumers show any changes in perception of Saturday shopping three years after the expansion of store hours and, if so, why? Answers to these questions can provide insight regarding the dynamics of adaptation associated with policy changes such as reduced shopping restrictions, as well as give indications to retailers of key concerns leading to customer patronage. The focus of our inquiry was placed on Saturday shopping, as expanded store hours on Saturday seemed to provide a very fundamental change to German shopping behavior. Not only did the 1996 law expand Saturday hours of operation more than those on weekdays (one and a half hours on weekdays from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. vs. two hours on Saturdays from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.), but the change on Saturdays appeared also to be more pronounced as it practically extended shopping into the afternoon. Before the expansion, most consumers ended their Saturday shopping trips to go home for lunch.

To conduct our inquiry, students at the same large German public university were asked to complete an eight-page questionnaire in both the fall of 1996 and 1999. Student samples were deemed appropriate for this study since their age distribution placed them in a cohort that had only limited opportunity to shop on Saturdays until the store hour expansion in 1996. Hence,

they possessed little prior exposure and, ostensibly, few pre-established responses regarding Saturday retailing based on experience.

A total of 77 students in 1996 and 110 students in 1999 comprised the two samples. A comparison of the two samples is evident in Table 1. As can be seen, on most critical dimensions, e.g., age, gender, religious attendance, and marital status, the two groups were quite similar. Other factors to note are that most of the respondents in both samples worked either full-time or part-time, and cited Catholic or Lutheran (the two biggest denominations in Germany) as their religious affiliations.

To assess and compare the two samples' perceptions of Saturday shopping, a total of twenty items were developed. While some of the items were qualitative in nature, most of the items utilized 5-point Likert-like response categories, ranging from "strongly disagree (1)" to "strongly agree (5)" to accompany statements regarding shopping patterns and preferences. The items were pre-tested and designed to tap the respondents' attitudes toward shopping on the weekend, reasons for doing so, product categories purchased, likely reactions if they were not allowed to continue to shop on Saturday, and related lifestyle questions. The questionnaire was administered to respondents in a group setting and required approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

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*Insert Table 1 about here.*

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## Results

Based on a comparison of the two samples' responses to our questionnaire, strong evidence exists to support the contention that perceptions of Saturday shopping by young Germans substantially changed over the three-year period between 1996 and 1999. Consistent with previous recommendations, a two-stage approach was used to study differences between groups (i.e., the two samples) between multiple dependent variables (cf. Darden and Perreault, 1975; Pedhazur, 1982; Spector, 1977). During the first stage of analysis, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test the null hypothesis of no simultaneous among-group (i.e. among-sample) differences on the dependent variables. While a MANOVA answers the question of whether group differences exist between a set of examined variables, it does not identify each variable's contribution to group separation. In the event that overall group differences are found, further analysis is needed to determine the source of the group differences. The second stage of analysis consisted of an analysis of variance (ANOVA) of each variable tested under the overall MANOVA. ANOVAs were used to examine the separate contributions of each variable to the differences found between the two samples independently of the other variables (cf. Cooley and Lohnes, 1971; Spector, 1977).

In an additional step, a least squares approach following Perreault and Darden (1975) was used to show that two theoretically relevant variables, religious affiliation and part-time vs. full-time work, did not account for significant amounts of variability in the responses. The use of least squares analysis instead of a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was

appropriate because of unequal sample sizes in the study. The treatment of the two variables as covariates in a blocking factor design would have reduced the total number of cases for the statistical examination (Perreault and Darden, 1975). In light of relatively low sample sizes this would have limited the analysis unduly.

The initial MANOVA revealed that the 1999 sample indicated an amount of variability significantly different from the 1996 sample on four important dimensions,  $\lambda=.94$ ,  $F(4,164)=2.71$ ,  $p<.05$ . Table 2 depicts the results of the separate ANOVAs for each individual variable found to be significant in the overall MANOVA. The 1999 sample showed higher agreement (mean<sub>1999</sub>=3.11) than the 1996 sample (mean<sub>1996</sub>=2.70) that Saturday shopping was a fun activity with  $F(1,175)=5.16$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $\omega^2=.03$ . Similarly, the more recent sample was more likely to agree that it would make a difference if Saturday shopping were not allowed any longer (*reverse* scored item, mean<sub>1999</sub>=2.03, mean<sub>1996</sub>=2.55,  $F(1,179)=8.14$ ,  $p<.01$ ,  $\omega^2=.04$ ). In addition, compared to its 1996 counterpart (mean<sub>1996</sub>=2.04), the 1999 sample indicated that they consumed

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*Insert Table 2 about here.*

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lunch outside of their homes more frequently on Saturday (mean<sub>1999</sub>=2.41) with  $F(1,174)=4.49$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $\omega^2=.03$ , and that they would favor the opportunity to shop on Sundays if it were allowed in the future (mean<sub>1999</sub>=4.68, mean<sub>1996</sub>=4.07,  $F(1,178)=5.14$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $\omega^2=.03$ ).

In a final step, we checked whether two other theoretically relevant variables, religious



affiliation and part-time vs. full-time work, accounted for significant amounts of variability in the responses. Beta values for either categorical variable were shown to be insignificant using a least squares analysis as recommended by Perreault and Darden (1975). No other variables appeared to provide a theoretical justification for the differences found. Hence, the significant changes we detected were attributed to the change in consumer attitudes resulting from new store hour regulations.

The sample sizes in this study appeared sufficient as indicated by the effect sizes reported in Table 2. The use of the least squares approach as advocated by Perreault and Darden (1975) appeared to have been warranted. While most effect sizes remained relatively small, they produced very strong and robust differences that remained at  $p < .05$  throughout the analysis (Sawyer and Ball, 1981).

In addition to these tests, frequencies were tallied and compared across the two samples regarding their shopping motives. In 1996, roughly 42% of the respondents indicated that they shop on Saturday mostly for “products to satisfy their daily needs”; in other words, for groceries as well as other small staples. Only 25% declared Saturday as a day for more leisurely “browsing and window shopping”. In contrast, in 1999, roughly 83% of the respondents related that “browsing and window shopping” was their primary shopping activity on Saturdays, while the percentage of those who said Saturdays were for grocery shopping and the like remained nearly the same as in 1996. The notion that Saturday seemed to have developed into a shopping day during which hedonic shopping motives were more present than utilitarian ones, was also

supported by the fact that over 20% of the 1999 sample declared that they used Saturday shopping trips to gather information about fashion and trends. This category had received no attention whatsoever in 1996.

### **Discussion of Findings**

It seems apparent that expanded Saturday shopping opportunities had a noticeable effect on respondents' perceptions of Saturday as a shopping day, as well as their consumption patterns and related affective responses. Longer store hours and greater overall shopping opportunities available to consumers appear to have led to behavioral modifications regarding the type of shopping done on Saturdays. If German consumers in general are similar to our samples, there is evidence that people have changed their behaviors from mere transactional shopping for groceries and other necessities to more hedonic shopping. Saturday shopping has become a fun activity and its hedonic appeal has found a manifest expression in the significant increase in lunch consumption outside the home. Further, it appears that even the rather slight expansion of Saturday store hours by only two hours may actually have an effect on consumers' orientations toward shopping, and that Sunday retailing would be a welcome option to them. It is somewhat surprising that such definite changes became so pervasive within a mere three year time period. Of course, it may be that our sample of young consumers are particularly apt to react to expanded shopping opportunities much quicker and more readily than other consumer segments.

Overall, the findings of this research provide further support for previous store hour studies. Notably, expanded shopping opportunities seem to have changed the character of

Saturdays from a day of routine shopping for necessities to a day that could be likened to a Sunday in America, replete with its varied retail activities. Gentry *et al.* (1997) described the type of shopping done on Sundays in the U.S. in terms similar to those found in the present inquiry regarding Saturday shopping - namely its recreational, hedonic and “fun” nature. In light of the absence of Sunday shopping in Germany and other parts of the world, longer store hours on Saturday appear to provide a readily accepted substitute.

Further, the development of more hedonic shopping motives as a result of expanded store hours seem to support the long held controversial notion that longer hours would lead to an increase in overall retail sales. Thurik (1987) and, more recently, Grünhagen and Mittelstaedt (2001) posit that a rise in macroeconomic retail sales would ensue as a consequence of increases in opportunities to acquire shopping and specialty goods sales. Arguments exist that longer store hours should raise disposable incomes as consumers shift their shopping for staples to more price advantageous mass merchandisers, thus generating marked savings. Expenditures utilizing the increased disposable incomes are then redistributed to purchases of more expensive cars, furniture, etc., hence satisfying more hedonic consumer wants. Our study indicates that, indeed, a shift seems to have occurred away from shopping primarily for convenience goods and staples, such as groceries, to include also more shopping and specialty goods, such as fashion items and restaurant meals. In other words, longer store hours seem to allow consumers to make even small purchases at mass merchandisers, resulting in savings that are then used to facilitate a more hedonic lifestyle. As the only day on the weekend that allows for expanded shopping in Germany, Saturday has developed into an opportunity to pursue hedonic wants.

## **Recommendations and Future Research**

Several direct implications for marketers and for public policy makers can be deduced. From this exploratory study it seems clear that a demand has developed in Germany for more recreational types of shopping rather than shopping activities that are solely task-oriented. Accordingly, attracting consumers through positioning Saturday shopping as a "family leisure activity" or as a complement to facilitate traditional leisure pursuits such as gardening or home repairs may help enhance consumers' shopping focus. German retailers' task at this point should be to respond to the change in consumption behavior by facilitating hedonic shopping experiences. Promotions that declare Saturdays as family shopping days and provide specific consumer incentives for home improvement or gardening supplies might be considered. If Sunday shopping ever becomes a reality, the positioning task of promoting recreational types of shopping would have to include the entire weekend in its focus.

In a public policy context, the knowledge of the ongoing shift in consumer preferences should provide an impetus to modify some of the decision makers' orientations. As hedonic experiences add to an overall increase in macroeconomic retail sales, the German government (as well as regional and local policy makers) should become increasingly interested in supporting this trend, particularly in light of current unfavorable economic indicators. Allowing restaurants and bars to stay open longer in order to match the increased demand for out of home meal consumption and to boost sales appears to be a first step. College age students and younger consumers in general seem to be a prime market segment to be included in policy considerations,

since they appear to be willing to adapt to new retailing opportunities quickly. Perhaps, cooperative events by retailers and municipal administrations to sponsor town festivals and city celebrations to promote the recreational character of Saturdays, particularly to younger age segments, should be considered. As the benefits of longer hours of retail operation become more evident, a further expansion of store hours on Saturdays, during weeknights, and into Sundays would seem like the next logical sequence of events.

Future research needs to address whether the findings of our study will continue to manifest themselves in the long run or whether our results were a function simply of the college student sample paired with a recency effect. Did the store hour change generate an over-reaction in consumers' acceptance? Were other undetected factors contributing to the pronounced behavioral changes over the three-year period? Further, the trade-offs created through the shopping time expansion with respect to the types of products purchased need to be carefully examined. Our study provides an initial indication that expanded shopping opportunities may result in more hedonic purchasing, but we clearly have not examined overall expenditure flows into specific product categories. Also, future inquiry should investigate whether certain product categories or retail formats are more or less popular among consumers when it comes to hedonic shopping. As more attention to the notion of an "experience economy" (c.f., Pine and Gilmore, 1999) – an economy driven by the quest to engage consumers through the provision of experience generating goods and services – and "entertailing" (Jones, 1999; Kim, 2001) becomes evident, new ways of retailing most assuredly will need to be developed.

Overall, this study provides some preliminary evidence to support the liberalization of

shopping times, not only in Germany, but on a global scale. Seemingly, consumers who may initially be reluctant to embrace longer retail hours for a variety of reasons develop an appreciation for the time utility offered by expanded hours of operation in a relatively short period. Further, the observed shift in consumer preferences when it comes to the type of shopping that occurs on weekends appears to suggest new promise for retailers around the world that are searching for ways to expand their patronage; offering different product assortments that attract existing consumer segments seems plausible, given our results. In addition, the quest for hedonic want satisfaction by customers offers stores the opportunity to establish and develop close ties and loyalty with customers, presumably much more so than shops that merely offer generic products that satisfy task-oriented shopping motives.

In short, our findings appear to offer the promise of an alternative route to financial reward for retailers, and a mechanism to establish and enjoy the benefits of customer relationship management. Of course, as with all exploratory research such as ours, further study to confirm the soundness of our initial findings is needed. Nevertheless, this examination should provide some enlightenment to retailers and public policy decision makers alike regarding the efficacy and positive outcomes of expanded retail hours.

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**Table 1: Demographics of the Samples**

	1996 (%)	1999 (%)
<b>WORK</b>		
Part-Time	48.1	67.3
Full-Time	42.9	16.4
<b>RELIGION</b>		
Catholic	27.3	41.8
Lutheran	22.1	24.5
<b>CHURCH</b>		
No Regular Attendance	88.3	84.5
<b>GENDER</b>		
Male	55.8	59.1
Female	42.9	37.3
<b>AGE</b>		
22-24	58.5	60.0
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>		
Single	66.2	60.0

**Table 2: ANOVA Results**

VARIABLES	Year	Mean	F	Df	p	$\omega^2$
Sat. Fun	1996	2.7	5.16	175	0.02**	0.03
	1999	3.11				
Sat. No Difference	1996	2.55	8.14	179	0.00***	0.04
	1999	2.03				
Sat. Lunch	1996	2.04	4.49	174	0.04**	0.03
	1999	2.41				
Sun. Future	1996	4.07	5.14	178	0.02**	0.03
	1999	4.68				

\*\*\* significant at  $p < .01$

\*\*significant at  $p < .05$