Full Length Research Paper

A comparison of service experience on repatronage intention between department stores and hypermarkets in Taiwan

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This paper compares the effect of service experience at department stores and hypermarkets on the customer's repatronage intentions, that is, the customer's desire to make a repeat purchase. Service experience covers three aspects: core service, employee service, and servicescape. The impact of service experience on emotional response, satisfaction with monetary value, and repatronage intentions are discussed. First, in-depth interviews with senior managers are analyzed to identify core service at department stores and hypermarkets. Second, the SEM method is used to test the hypotheses of the study. Finally, based on analysis of results, we suggest that department stores should target customer's emotional responses; whereas hypermarkets should focus on perceived monetary value. In addition, department stores should improve the training of their employees, and the retail format should fully recognize the importance of core service.

Key words: Service experience, emotional response, monetary satisfaction, repatronage intention, perceived monetary value, servicescape, core service.

INTRODUCTION

The marketers at both department stores and hypermarkets have to face seriously, the multi-faceted challenge of delivering tangible goods, intangible services and ideas for the purpose of satisfying consumers' needs. Due to the nature of the service offered, purchasing decisions, consumption experience and post-purchase evaluation of services are often problematic to service consumers (Grace and O'Cass, 2004). When consumers patronize a store, they first encounter the physical environment or servicescape; then, they engage in personal interaction with the sales people; finally, the store processes and finishes the transaction. During this transaction, the consumers' emotional response and perceived monetary value will be impacted by the servicescape, service people, and service context or core service. The result of

the consumer's experience will influence their satisfaction and repatronage intentions. Understanding how consumers cope with the myriad problems associated with making a purchase is important in providing consumer services: in the service business, it is not so much what the business does but what the customer experiences that is important (Martin and Horne, 1992). Prior research on service experience may allow the following three conclusions to be drawn (Baker, et al., 2002):

(1) Various environmental elements (including music, color, scent and crowdedness) affect consumer responses.
(2) General factors (such as "store atmosphere", "physical attractiveness", or just "service experience" of the store) affect store patronage intentions.
(3) Store environments trigger affective reactions in the perception of value.

Research on the different aspects of service experience and their impact on customer satisfaction and repatronage

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intentions is, however, scarce and there is little related research or discussion about the different types of service marketplace. The aims of this study, therefore, are twofold: first, the study seeks to build a model of the marketplace, illustrating the relationship between repeat customers and service experience. Second, the study explores the differences in the way two different types of marketplace (that is, department stores and hyper-markets) gain repeat customers.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Satisfaction and repatronage intentions

Satisfaction, which is an emotive response to service attributes and service information (Spreng et al., 1996), is perhaps the basis for customer retention. It may further be viewed as a summary psychological state resulting when a customer's surroundings exceed her expectations and dispel her preconceived negative feelings about the consumption experience (Alam and Khalifa, 2009). When satisfaction is achieved, the consumer's loyalty is strengthened and she is more likely to re-patronize the store (Law et al., 2004; Hicks et al., 2005). Thus:

H_1: Consumers' satisfaction will have a significant positive effect on their repatronage intentions.

Value for money

Value for money is defined as a cognitive trade-off between perceived quality and sacrifice, based on the notion of monetary exchange (Zeithaml, 1988; Dodds et al., 1991). In a retail service setting, Sweeney et al. (1997) found that value for money had a significant and positive effect on the customer's willingness to buy an electrical appliance. Moreover, some authors claim that customer satisfaction is not enough to command customer loyalty, while other scholars argue that the solution is to add value to the transaction first (Stem and Thiry, 1991). This study will develop these findings and test the link between value for money and service satisfaction. Thus:

H_2: Value for money has a significant positive effect on consumers' satisfaction.

Emotional response

Emotional response has been recognized as an important consumer issue. Bitner (1992) concluded that pleasure and arousal are the two positive emotional responses in consumers. Sherman et al. (1997) found that feelings aroused by the service experience are important for retail. Babin and Babin (2001) argue that feelings aroused within the retail store environment, affect perceived value and purchase intention. Grace and

O'Cass (2005) argue positive feelings such as pleasure or excitement aroused during patronage, may enhance customer satisfaction; whereas, negative feelings aroused during service consumption can have a negative impact on consumer evaluations (Machleit and Eroglu, 2000; Sweeney and Wyber, 2002). Thus:

H_3: Emotional response has a significant positive effect on consumers' satisfaction.

Service experience

Service experience may be defined as a "service encounter". Shostack (1985) proposes that a "service encounter" is the period of time during which a consumer directly interacts with the service. Biner (1990) adds that a "service encounter" is the service from the customer's point of view. Other similar terms (like "store environment" and "service provision") are used to describe the scope of service experience. Baker et al. (2002) argue that consumers evaluate a store according to its design, and ambient environment; thus, the "store environment' includes the consumer's perceptions about the store's design, its employees and its ambient music. Ambient music however, is not the only factor in creating a pleasing environment; there are other intangible and equally important core services that must be considered (Wakefield and Baker, Sirohi et al., 1998; Baker et al., 2002). Core service and employee service are in fact closely related. Johns (1999) argues that the customer's experience contains elements of core transaction and personal experience, which are present in different proportions in different service outputs and encounters, and which contribute in different ways to each individual's experience. Based on this view, Grace and O'Cass (2004, 2005), define the "service provision" of retail more completely, pointing out that it includes core service (process), employee service and servicescape. They do not, however, mention the detailed influences of each factor. This study, based on the "service provision" of Grace and O'Cass (2005) as the scope of service experience, will explore the impact of service provision on positive shopping emotion and perceived monetary value.

Servicescape

Becker (1981) indicates that servicescape is "The way physical setting is created in organizations, which has barely been tapped as a tangible organizational resource". In comparison, other variables, such as pricing and advertising, added features and special promotions are given much more attention than the physical setting as ways in which customers can be attracted to, and satisfied by a firm's services. Servicescape, however, not only provides valuable tangible brand clues prior to purchase, but also adds an important dimension to the service experience due to its impact on consumers during
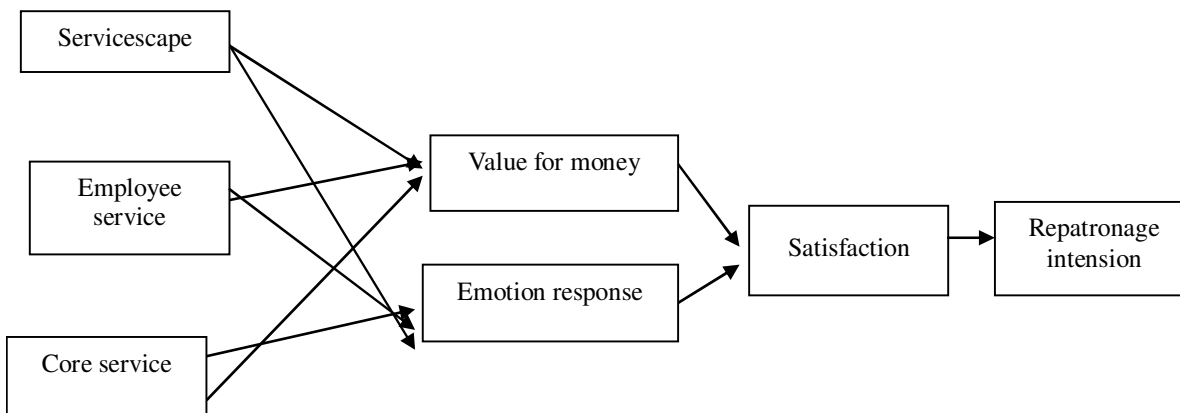
Figure 1. The conceptual framework of this study.

consumption (Grace and O'Cass, 2004). The influence of servicescape on a customer's satisfaction and behavior, and on establishing or reinforcing an image, is in fact, particularly apparent in the service business (Kotler, 1973; Zeithaml et al., 1985, Oakes, 2000). Prior research on servicescape found that it can affect consumers' emotional, cognitive, and physiological responses, which in turn influence their evaluations and behavior (Bitner, 1992; Schmidt and Sapsford, 1995; Hoffman et al., 2003). Thus:

H_4: Good servicescape has a significant positive effect on perceived monetary value.
H_5: Good servicescape has a significant positive effect on emotional response.

Employee service

The service provided by employees plays an important role in consumers' evaluation of service performance (Broderick, 1999) because personal friendliness between the customer and the service employee is significantly associated with loyalty (Butcher et al., 2001). Employee service may be viewed as part of the store's ambience and could play a critical role in influencing consumers' moods and satisfaction (Grewal and Sharma, 1991). When making a purchase, especially in a department store, it is often necessary to seek a salesperson's assistance and advice (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997; Hartline et al., 2000). Other research has shown that the service provided by the employee may affect customer satisfaction (Gwinner et al., 1998) perception of service quality, (Bolton et al. 2003) future consumption behavior (Chandon et al., 1997), and increase profits for the service organization (Butcher et al., 2001). Thus:

H_6: Good employee service has a significant positive effect on perceived monetary value.
H_7: Good employee service has a significant positive effect on emotional response.

Core service

Consumers purchasing more standardized and less personalized services should expect less variability in the core service provided across alternative service companies (Bowen, 1990; Alam, 2009). This standardization of core services occurs because the characteristics of competing core services tend to neutralize or cancel each other out (Heath et al., 1994). Danaher and Mattsson (1998) argue that core service significantly effects consumer evaluations; McDougall and Levesque (2000) point out that the core (what is delivered) and the relational (how it is delivered) are the basic elements for most services which affect customer's satisfaction (Zeithaml et al., 1996). This study, however, includes only monetary satisfaction, neglecting emotional value. Jones et al. (2003) argue that when satisfaction with the core service is high, it enhances repatronage intentions. Thus:

H_8: Core service has a significant effect on perceived monetary value.
H_9: Core service has a significant effect on emotional response.

METHODOLOGY

Research framework

In Figure 1, there are 3 elements of service experience: servicescape, employee service, and core service. Each one can effect satisfaction through monetary value and emotional response. Repurchase intention can be affected by satisfaction.

Context of core service

Before developing a questionnaire, the context of core service should be defined. Even though both department stores and hypermarkets belong to the retail industry category, differences exist between them. In this study, in-depth interviews with two individual senior managers were utilized to acquire information on core service at a department store and a hypermarket as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The comparison of core service between department store and hypermarket.

Retail type	Department store	Hypermarket
Same	providing diverse products	
	providing customer with professional suggestions	
Different	VIP ROOM service	large parking space
	charming gift	transit DM information
	transit fashion information	express checkouts
	credit products (quality is the first concern)	credit products (safety is the first concern)

Core service includes diversifying products and providing customers with professional advice. There are four differences between the core service of department stores and that of hypermarkets: department stores have VIP ROOM services, luxury gifts, transit fashion information, and credit products (designed for quality). Hypermarkets have large parking areas, transit DM information, express checkouts, and credit products (designed for safety).

Questionnaire design and pretest

Based on previous related research, a questionnaire containing 34 items in 7 constructs with content validity was compiled. All items in the questionnaire were evaluated with a 5-point Likert scale anchored at 1 = "strongly disagree and 5 = "strongly agree". In the pretest, the study acquired 49 samples from the HanShin department store and 47 samples from the Carrefour hypermarket to test the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's α for each variable is over 0.7. However, for the "Emotional Response" variable, the item-to-total of ER4 is less than 0.3 in both the HanShin and Carrefour samples. The item-to-total of ER5 is less than 0.3 for Carrefour. Thus, in this study, ER4 and ER5 were deleted to improve consistency and reliability (Cronbach's α ranged from 0.7885 to 0.8312 for HanShin; 0.7284 to 0.8823 for Carrefour).

Main study

The samples in the main study represented the views of 600 adult men and women (300 for each of the two different retail stores), who were approached at store exists. 269 samples (82%) were collected at HanShin and 279 samples (93%) were collected at Carrefour. Unfinished questionnaires or logically inconsistent ones were deleted. The preliminary data analysis is shown in Table 2. The Cronbach's α was computed for each construct and the scales ranging from 0.7784 to 0.8807 indicate that all items are valid and reliable measures for their respective constructs. Then, exploratory factor analysis was conducted with all factors exhibiting eigen-values greater than 1, and factor loadings ranging within acceptable limits of 0.53 to 0.93. Finally, the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct was in excess of 0.5. Thus, the convergent validity of questionnaire is acceptable.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Model evaluation for department store

Except GFI (0.88), the indexes of goodness-of-fit reached the acceptable standard (Table 3). The model of this study is therefore acceptable. Based on the analysis results, the hypotheses were supported except H_2 and H_5 (Table 4).

Model evaluation for hypermarket

The indexes of goodness-of-fit reach the acceptable standard except GFI (0.87). The model of this study is therefore acceptable. Based on analysis results, the hypotheses were supported except H_2, H_3, and H_5 (Table 5).

Path comparison of department store and hypermarket

This study considered the total effect of two different types of retail and the results are shown in Table 6. For both HanShin and Carrefour, servicescape was the most effective aspect of service experience at affecting emotional response. Core service, however, was the most effective at affecting perceived monetary value. Turning to perceived monetary value, emotional response had a greater influence on satisfaction at HanShin, but the opposite was true at Carrefour. Finally, satisfaction was the most important factor affecting repatronage intention at both HanShin and Carrefour.

DISCUSSION

Good servicescape design can positively influence the consumer's emotional response

Among the three aspects of service experience, servicescape has the greatest influence on emotional response in both types of retail format, and it has greater effectiveness at the department than at the hypermarket. Passage and space arrangement, physical facilities and merchandising, atmosphere shaping and environmental cleanness should therefore be emphasized in retail industry.

Table 2. Preliminary data analysis of constructs.

| Construct | Context of item | Cronbach's α / Loading | |
Item coding		HanShin	Carrefour
Repatronage intension		**0.8652**	**0.8740**
RI1	I will probably use this store in the future.	0.66	0.62
RI2	This store is my first choice when I go shopping.	0.80	0.71
RI3	I am glad to recommend this store to my friends.	0.86	0.91
RI4	I will recommend this store when someone asking my suggestion.	0.83	0.93
Satisfaction		**0.8092**	**0.8160**
SA1	I am very satisfied with the service provided by this store.	0.65	0.69
SA2	The service provided by this store is beyond my expectation.	0.60	0.63
SA3	It is a satisfying experience for me to use this store.	0.83	0.80
SA4	It is the right choice for me to use this store.	0.80	0.76
Value for money		**0.8807**	**0.8274**
VM1	It is economical for me to use this store.	0.86	0.73
VM2	It is worth the money to use this store.	0.86	0.75
VM3	The pricing of this store is reasonable.	0.73	0.80
VM4	Comparing the prices, it is worth to spend the money.	0.77	0.67
Emotion response		**0.8361**	**0.8797**
ER1	When using this store, I feel joyous.	0.65	0.53
ER2	When using this store, I feel it is as good as expected.	0.69	0.58
ER3	When using this store, I feel surprised.	0.70	0.70
ER4	When using this store, I feel accepted.	---	---
ER5	When using this store, I feel sad. (reverse)	---	---
ER6	When using this store, I feel fearful. (reverse)	0.70	0.84
ER7	When using this store, I feel angered. (reverse)	0.68	0.88
ER8	When using this store, I feel disgusted. (reverse)	0.65	0.86
Servicescape		**0.8055**	**0.7959**
SS1	This store's physical facilities are visually attractive.	0.72	0.70
SS2	The environment of this store's inside is clean and tidy.	0.61	0.67
SS3	The atmosphere of this store is comfortable.	0.70	0.69
SS4	The design of this store is matched with service provided.	0.73	0.61
SS5	The arrangement of passage and space is perfect.	0.64	0.64
Employee services		**0.7784**	**0.7824**
ES1	Employees of this store have enough professional product knowledge.	0.67	0.70
ES2	Employees of this store are always willing to help me when needed.	0.73	0.67
ES3	Employees of this store are never too busy to respond to my request.	0.64	0.66
ES4	I can trust the employees of this store during transaction.	0.70	0.72
Core service		**0.8720**	**0.8510**
CS1	The core service provided by this store suits my needs.	0.67	0.71
CS2	The core service provided by this store is reliable.	0.77	0.71
CS3	The core service provided by this store is qualified.	0.82	0.75
CS4	The core service provided by this store is dependable.	0.79	0.82
CS5	The core service provided by this store is really good.	0.76	0.67

ER4 and ER5 are deleted in the pretest.

Table 3. The goodness-of-fit of proposed model.

Index	GFI	RMSEA	SRMR	AGFI	NFI	NNFI	CFI
Acceptable value	> 0.9	< 0.08	> 0.08	> 0.8	> 0.9	> 0.9	> 0.9
HanShin	0.89	0.054	0.076	0.82	0.94	0.97	0.97
Carrefour	0.87	0.060	0.080	0.81	0.91	0.94	0.95

The standard of acceptable value for goodness-of-fit based on Hair (1998).

Table 4. Results on hypotheses for department store.

Hypothesized paths	Hypothesis	Path	t-value	Result
Servicescape →Emotional response	H_1	0.30	3.35***	Supported
Servicescape →Value for money	H_2	0.12	1.50	Not supported
Employee service →Emotional response	H_3	0.19	2.13*	Supported
Employee service →Value for money	H_4	0.27	3.20***	Supported
Core service →Emotional response	H_5	0.14	1.52	Not supported
Core service →Value for money	H_6	0.30	3.44***	Supported
Emotion response → Satisfaction	H_8	0.47	6.05***	Supported
Value for money → Satisfaction	H_9	0.41	6.02***	Supported
Satisfaction → Repatronage intention	H_{10}	0.70	7.72***	Supported

"*" represents $P < 0.05$, "**" represents $P < 0.01$, "***" represents $P < 0.001$.

Table 5. Hypotheses results of hypermarket.

Hypothesized paths	Hypothesis	Path	t value	Result
Servicescape →Emotional response	H_1	0.21	2.25*	Supported
Servicescape →Value for money	H_2	-0.03	-0.32	Not supported
Employee service →Emotional response	H_3	0.14	1.67	Not supported
Employee service →Value for money	H_4	0.27	3.43***	Supported
Core service →Emotional response	H_5	0.08	0.90	Not supported
Core service →Value for money	H_6	0.46	5.70***	Supported
Emotion response →Satisfaction	H_8	0.19	2.85**	Supported
Value for money →Satisfaction	H_9	0.43	5.65***	Supported
Satisfaction →Repatronage intention	H_{10}	0.52	6.41***	Supported

"*"Represents $P < 0.05$; "**" represents $P < 0.01$; "***" represents $P < 0.001$.

Good employee service could positively influence value for money for consumer

Employee service has the same effectiveness at department stores and hypermarkets. Thus, consumers care about service contact in retail industry and good employee service could enhance positive monetary perception after the contact process.

In addition to possessing product knowledge, employees' insights into consumers' needs and immediate responses are the most important elements in building consumers' trust, as these cause consumers to believe that the store is dependable.

Based on the attributes of retailing, providing attractive core service for the consumer can positively influence perceived monetary value and satisfaction

Among the three aspects of service experience, core service has the greatest influence on monetary value in both retail formats, although this is more evident at hyper-markets than at department stores. In light of the results of in-depth interviews, the most attractive core services is that consumers can receive are luxury gifts of good quality in well designed package showing only the credit card issued by the department store. As for hypermarkets,

Table 6. Comparison of department store and hypermarket.

Predictor variable	Department store			Hypermarket		
Explain variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
Emotional response						
Servicescape	0.30	0	0.30*	0.21	0	0.21*
Employee service	0.19	0	0.19	0.14	0	0.14
Core service	0.14	0	0.14	0.08	0	0.08
Value for money						
Servicescape	0.12	0.01	0.13	-0.02	0	-0.02
Employee service	0.27	0.01	0.28	0.28	0	0.28
Core service	0.29	0.01	0.30*	0.46	0	0.46*
Satisfaction						
Servicescape	0	0.19	0.19	0	0.03	0.03
Employee service	0	0.20	0.20*	0	0.15	0.15
Core service	0	0.19	0.19	0	0.21	0.21*
Emotional response	0.48	0.01	0.49*	0.19	0.01	0.20
Value for money	0.41	0	0.41	0.43	0	0.43*
Repatronage intention						
Servicescape	0	0.14	0.14	0	0.02	0.02
Employee service	0	0.14	0.14	0	0.08	0.08
Core service	0	0.13	0.13	0	0.11	0.11
Emotional response	0	0.34	0.34	0	0.11	0.11
Value for money	0	0.28	0.28	0	0.22	0.22
Satisfaction	0.70	0	0.70*	0.52	0	0.52*

consumers are most interested in special price information. Thus, in addition to valued products and discount goods, marketers should utilize posters and standers about DM information to directly deliver information to customers and encourage purchases.

Emotional response and value for money cause effective influence on satisfaction for different types of retail

Both emotional response and monetary value have significant positive effect on consumers' satisfaction. Parameter values in the analysis indicate that emotional response plays a more important role than monetary value at the department store, but the reverse is true for the hypermarket. This would suggest that consumers are more influenced by their emotional feelings during the purchasing process at the department store. Providing positive emotional experience may, therefore, be the most effective way to enhance consumers' satisfaction. On the other hand, customers are concerned about purchasing products at good prices: price is an underlying index by which consumers judge their satisfaction at a hypermarket.

Satisfaction is the main influence on consumers' repatronage intention; therefore, contextualization of service experience is key to enhancing satisfaction

Previous studies have confirmed that satisfaction is the most significant influence on re-patronage intention. In fact, this study also supports this conclusion. However, in considering the indirect effect of path analysis, both monetary value and emotional response play important roles in creating repatronage intention. In addition, with the exception of hypermarket service scape, the elements of service experience could all exert a significant indirect influence on satisfaction. This implies that we should not only focus on consumers' satisfaction and service experience; it is perhaps more important to contextualize each aspect of the service experience and to consider its implications for different types of retail.

MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

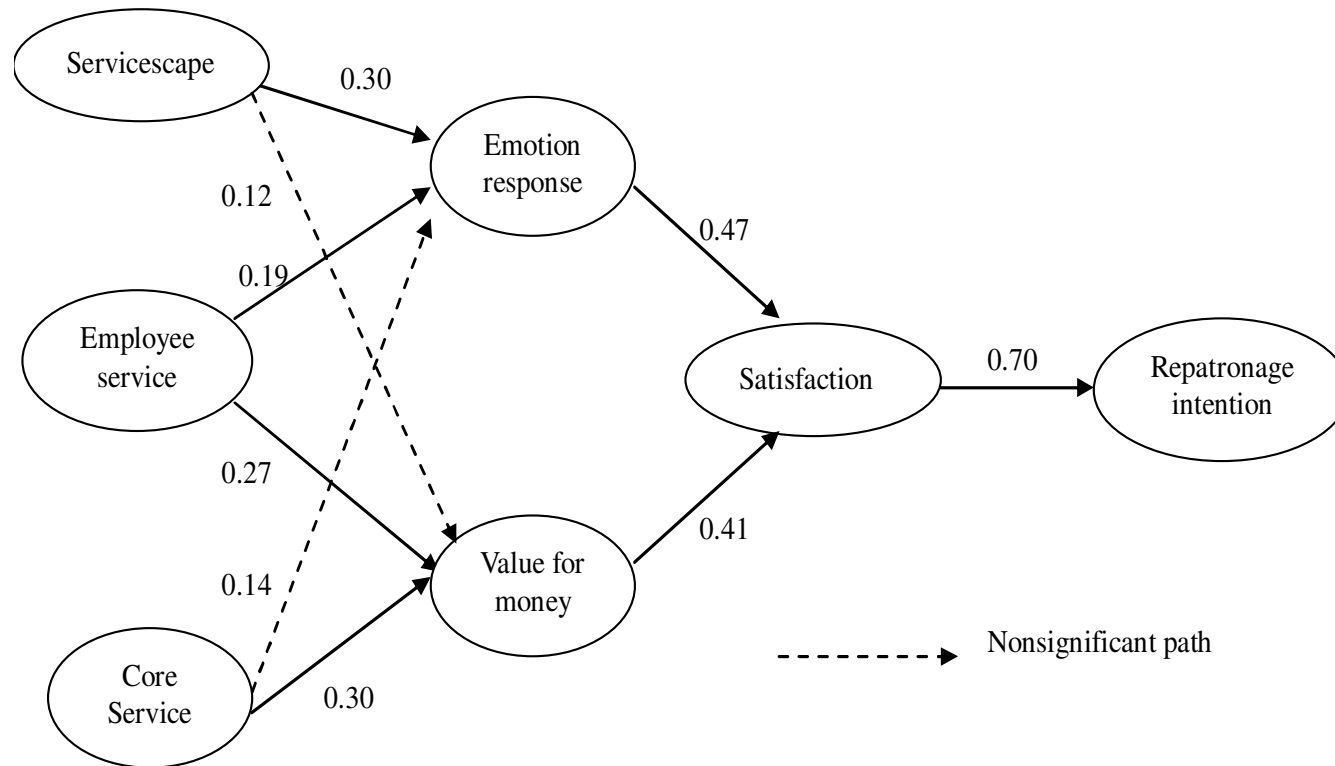Based on earlier conclusion and discussion, satisfaction

Figure 2. Analysis results for the proposed model of department stores.

is the main impetus for repatronage. This study focuses on satisfaction, and management implications for academic professionals and those in the industry for stimulating repatronage intention.

For department stores, emotional response has greater influence on satisfaction than on monetary value, but the parameter values are quite close (in comparison with hypermarkets). Therefore, the study has to treat them as nearly equal in operation. To achieve this propose effectively, there are two paths to follow. First, servicescape and employee service could influence satisfaction through inducing positive emotional response. Marketers should invest more effort on improving physical design to create a happy atmosphere, facilitate surprise activities and make consumers feel comfortable in their environment, and on staff training such as utilizing product knowledge to encourage consumers to purchase, get what they want and build trust in the store. Second, core service and employee service could influence satisfaction through perceived monetary value. Marketers could utilize focus-group interviews to understand the opinions of consumers, or analyze the differences with competitors to find out what the most suitable core service should be. Then the services could be implemented by proper trainings of employee to keep the service processes consistent and reliable for customers' repatronage (Figure 2).

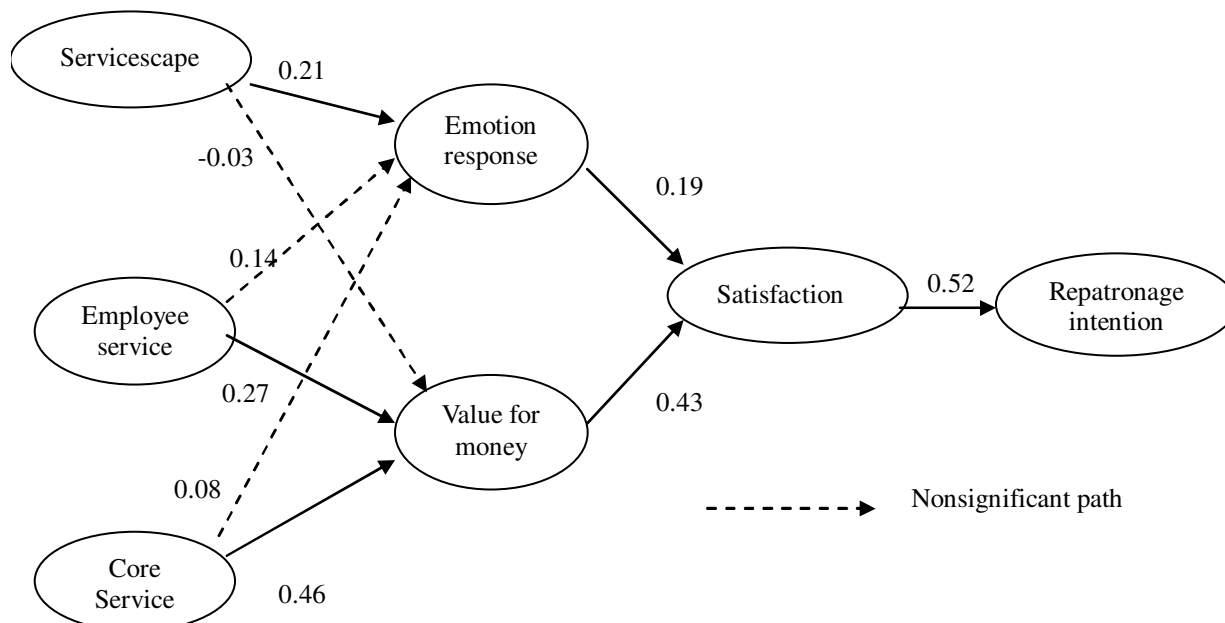For hypermarkets, value for money is more powerful than emotional response in inducing

Figure 3. Result of analysis for proposed model of hypermarket.

satisfaction, and the difference in parameter values between them is obvious (as compared with department stores). Therefore, instilling a sense of monetary value is of high priority for those in the industry. Core service and employee service could help to realize this function. Spacious car parks and express checkouts are essential services for consumers. In addition, providing diverse and safe products to satisfy consumers' needs is also an important issue. Therefore, cooperative effort among staff of different positions is necessary to ensure the purchasing processes is smooth Since servicescape is the only element of service experience which enhances emotional response, a clean and tidy environment is a basic requirement for consumers. Those in the industry could utilize POP posters and merchandise facilities to catch the attention of consumers. Music broadcasting and broad passageways arrangement could also help consumers feel comfortable while shopping (Figure 3).

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