Foundations and Trends® in Marketing
Vol. 8, No. 2 (2013) 69–145

DOI: 10.1561/1700000035

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The Emotional Shopper: Assessing the Effectiveness of Retail Therapy

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Contents

Abstract

Shopping is an integral part of our everyday lives. Common wisdom suggests that many consumers engage in shopping and buying as a means to repair their negative feelings — a notion commonly referred to as *retail therapy*. However, does retail therapy really work? The present monograph seeks to address this question by proposing a tripartite approach, reviewing and organizing relevant research in marketing and consumer psychology based on this tripartite framework: (1) motivational (the goals and motives that consumers have for shopping); (2) behavioral (the activities in which consumers engage during the shopping process); and (3) emotional (the feelings that consumers experience while shopping). Although accumulating evidence suggests that retail therapy does work to a certain extent, simultaneously considering the three perspectives in future empirical investigation helps to further improve our understanding of the antecedents, underlying mechanisms, and consequences of retail therapy. Accordingly, a number of questions and directions for future research on the topic of retail therapy are discussed, drawing upon the proposed tripartite framework.

L. Lee. *The Emotional Shopper: Assessing the Effectiveness of Retail Therapy.* Foundations and Trends® in Marketing, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 69–145, 2013.

DOI: 10.1561/1700000035.

1

Introduction

Besides work and sleep, shopping is a daily activity on which people in many parts of the world spend the most amount of their time [Hutton, 2002]. In addition to buying and acquiring a variety of products and services that serve every day functional needs, shopping also helps to achieve more hedonic goals, in particular, self-gratification and mood repair [Isen, 1984; Tauber, 1972] — a notion popularly referred to as *retail therapy*. Indeed, anecdotes that speak to the incidence and influence of retail therapy in our lives are aplenty:

- *"I always say shopping is cheaper than a psychiatrist."* — Tammy Faye Messner, American singer and television personality

- *"Win or lose, we go shopping after the election."* — Imelda Marcos, previous First Lady of the Philippines

- *"I was so nervous...I just had to go shopping."* — Usher, American singer–songwriter

- *"When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping."* — undetermined

- *"Everyone needs an occasional dose of retail therapy."* — Susan Thurston, Tampa Bay Times staff writer

- *"Whoever said money can't buy happiness simply didn't know where to go shopping."* — Bo Derek, American actress

These popular quotes seem to underscore the prevalence of shopping as a means to regulate one's negative emotions. In fact, nearly one in three Americans shop to alleviate stress, according to a study commissioned by the Huffington Post [Gregoire, 2013] that polled over 1,000 U.S. adults online. Ebates.com [2013], an online cash-back shopping merchant, reported an even larger proportion in their recent Retail Therapy survey: they found that among 1,000 American adults surveyed, more than half (51.8%) shop and spend money to improve their mood. Comparable figures have also been reported in academic research. In a study on retail therapy, Atalay and Meloy [2011] found that among 69 college participants, 43 (62%) reported having purchased an item to treat themselves in the past one week in order to repair their mood; in comparison, 19 (28%) were motivated by celebratory events (see also Krupnick [2011] and Yarrow [2013]).

Given these convergent statistics, the many stories and anecdotes we might have heard about retail therapy, and our own personal experiences as consumers, to what extent does retail therapy really work?

In this monograph, I examine this question by reviewing the extant literature on shopping behavior and emotions. Specifically, I propose and adopt a tripartite approach to provide a more systematic and holistic treatment of this subject, assessing whether retail therapy works according to three perspectives (see Figure 1.1):

1. *Motivational* — I examine broadly the different goals and motivations that consumers have for shopping, and whether these various motivations may contribute toward more positive moods and greater well-being.

2. *Behavioral* — By viewing shopping as a sequence of constituent actions or activities, I assess whether engaging in these specific activities can bring about improved moods and well-being.

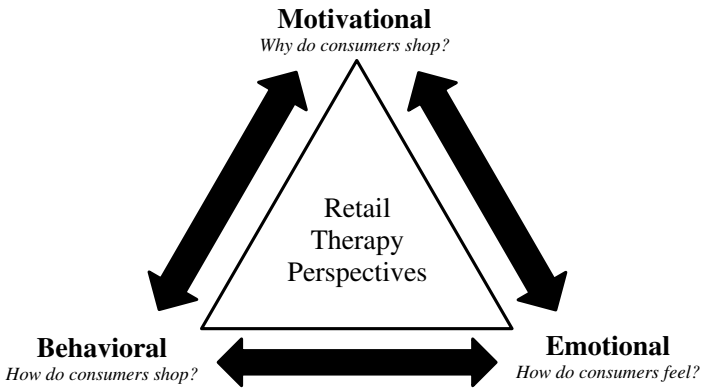

Figure 1.1: A tripartite framework for examining the effectiveness of retail therapy.

3. *Emotional* — More specifically, I consider shopping as a hedonic experience that triggers a variety of emotions. The incidence (or lack) of these specific emotions when consumers shop is examined.

As Figure 1.1 illustrates, these three perspectives, though individually distinct, are interrelated and complementary with one another. For instance, consumers' motivation to shop can influence how they go about their shopping, which can in turn affect their emotional experience. As another example, how consumers shop in a store can impact how they feel while shopping which can conversely influence their shopping goals.

The rest of this monograph is structured as follows. In Section 2, I review some conceptual foundations of the notion of retail therapy, including its definition and scope as well as the scales that researchers have developed to measure it. I next delve into the three aforementioned perspectives, assessing the effectiveness of retail therapy from each perspective by discussing and analyzing relevant work that has adopted the particular perspective in Sections 3–5. Finally, I conclude with a general discussion of the main findings as well as some questions and directions for future research in Section 6.

2

Retail Therapy — Conceptual Foundations

2.1 Definitions and conceptualizations

The notion of *retail therapy* has generally been conceived in two ways (see Figure 2.1). The more common approach associates the term with the use of shopping and buying as a way to repair or alleviate negative feelings [Atalay and Meloy, 2011; Babin and Griffin, 1994; Babin and Darden, 1995; Elliott, 1994; Faber and Christenson, 1996; Kacen, 1998; Kacen and Friese, 1999; Kang and Johnson, 2010; 2011; Kemp and Kopp, 2011; Li and Li, 2013; Luomala, 1998; 2002; Rick et al., 2014; Yurchisin et al., 2006; 2008]. Kemp and Kopp [2011], in particular, propose the term *emotional regulation consumption* to refer specifically to this notion of retail therapy. In comparison, a number of other researchers view retail therapy with a different pair of lens, regarding it as the consumption of goods in order to protect one's self-concept and to compensate for perceived psychosocial deficiencies such as low self-esteem or perceived loss of power [Dichter, 1960; Gronmo, 1988; Sivanathan and Pettit, 2010; Woodruffe, 1997; Woodruffe-Burton and Elliott, 2005; Woodruffe-Burton et al., 2002]. Correspondingly, the term *compensatory consumption* is often used interchangeably to describe this interpretation of retail therapy [see also Kang and Johnson, 2010].

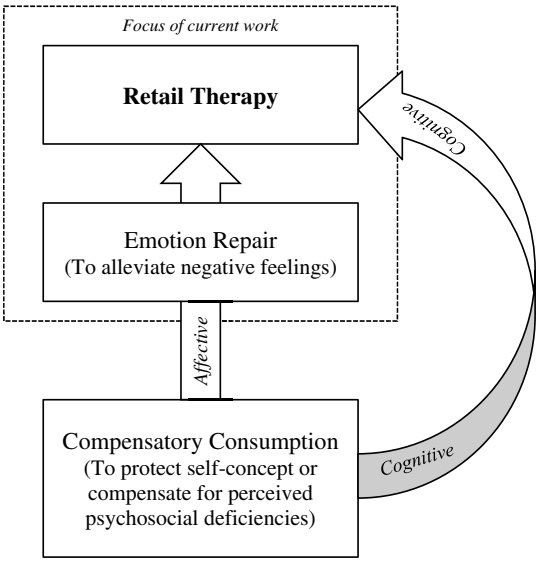

Figure 2.1: A dual-route conceptualization of retail therapy.

This interpretation arguably represents a narrower lens with which to consider retail therapy given that an array of other factors, besides perceived psychosocial deficiencies, can also negatively color one's emotions [Cryder et al., 2008].

In this monograph, I adopt the emotion-repair view of retail therapy for two main reasons: (a) it is a broader, and importantly, a more popular and widely accepted view of retail therapy from both an academic standpoint and the general consumer's understanding; (b) whether perceived psychosocial deficiencies always follow an affective route (in addition to the cognitive route) in triggering the desire for compensatory consumption and greater spending seems debatable [Chen et al., 2010; Gao et al., 2009; Mandel and Smeesters, 2008; Rucker and Galinsky, 2008, see Figure 2.1 for a depiction of the two routes associated with compensatory consumption]. Nonetheless, to the extent that such deficiencies trigger negative feelings that motivate the desire for mood repair and thus greater spending, I shall discuss the relevant empirical findings accordingly.

2.2 Measurement scales for retail therapy

A few researchers have developed scales to measure retail therapy in order to operationalize the construct and facilitate its empirical investigation. These scales are summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Retail therapy measurement scales.

References	Name of scale	Scale items
Arnold and Reynolds [2003]	Gratification shopping subscale of hedonic shopping motivations	(3 items) • When I'm in a down mood, I go shopping to make me feel better. • To me, shopping is a way to relieve stress. • I go shopping when I want to treat myself to something special.
Isen [1984]	Mood repair	(4 items) • Buying cheers me up when I'm feeling down. • When I'm feeling depressed I have to buy something. • Shopping has helped me cope with depression in the past. • Shopping helps me cope with depression now.
Kang and Johnson [2011]	Retail therapy scale	(22 items, 4 factors) *Factor 1: Therapeutic shopping motivations* (6 items) • I shop to relieve my stress. • I shop to cheer myself up. • I shop to make myself feel better. • I shop to compensate for a bad day. • I shop to feel relaxed. • I shop to feel good about myself. *Factor 2: Therapeutic shopping value: Positive mood reinforcement* (6 items) • Shopping is a positive distraction. • Shopping gives me a sense of achievement.

(*Continued*)

Table 2.1: (*Continued*)

References	Name of scale	Scale items
		• I like the visual stimulation shopping provides. • Shopping provides me with knowledge of new styles. • I enjoy being in a pleasant environment that shopping provides. • Finding a great deal reinforces positive feelings about myself. *Factor 3: Therapeutic shopping value: Negative mood reduction* (5 items) • Shopping is an escape from loneliness. • Shopping is a way to remove myself from stressful environments. • Shopping is a way to take my mind off things that are bothering me. • Shopping for something new fills an empty feeling. • Shopping is a way to control things when other things seem out of control. *Factor 4: Therapeutic shopping outcome* (5 items) • My shopping trip to relieve my bad mood is successful. • After a shopping trip to make myself feel better, the good feelings generated last at least for the rest of the day. • I feel good immediately after my shopping trip to relieve a bad mood. • I use items I bought during my shopping to relieve a bad mood. • When I use items I bought during my shopping to relieve my bad mood, I remember the shopping experience.
Yurchisin et al. [2008]	Compensatory consumption (of apparel products)	(46 items)* • I shop for apparel when I am not content with my life.

*Full scale not reported in article.

Among the four sets of measures, the first three pertain more to the mood-repair interpretation of retail therapy, while the fourth scale [Yurchisin et al., 2008] applies more to compensatory consumption. The three-item scale by Arnold and Reynolds [2003] represents the "gratification shopping" subscale from a larger set of 18 items that comprise six different dimensions of hedonic shopping motivations. The remaining two scales, though qualitatively similar in scope, differ somewhat in their degree of specificity. Both scales capture the motivation *and* effectiveness aspects of retail therapy; however, while Isen's [1984] four-item scale is relatively succinct, Kang and Johnson's [2011] four-factor scale delves more deeply into two potential sources of value in retail therapy — enhancement of positive moods and reduction of negative moods. This comprehensive 22-item scale also embeds several potential causes for negative feelings and hence the desire for retail therapy, in particular, stressful environments, loneliness or the feeling of emptiness, and the perceived loss of control over one's circumstances.

2.3 Other related constructs

The presence of different definitions for retail therapy suggests that other distinct yet related constructs (for example, mood regulation and materialism) exist, and these constructs are often discussed in the context of retail therapy. Therefore, it seems worthwhile to first briefly discuss how these other constructs are different from but yet conceptually related to retail therapy before examining our main construct of interest in detail. (Figure 2.2 illustrates the conceptual relationships of these myriad constructs with retail therapy by depicting their respective locations within the proposed tripartite framework of retail therapy.)

2.3.1 Affect regulation

Affect regulation can be defined as individuals' spontaneous — whether conscious or unconscious — attempt to intensify, attenuate, or maintain an affective state or subjective feeling [Cohen et al., 2008; Gross, 1998;

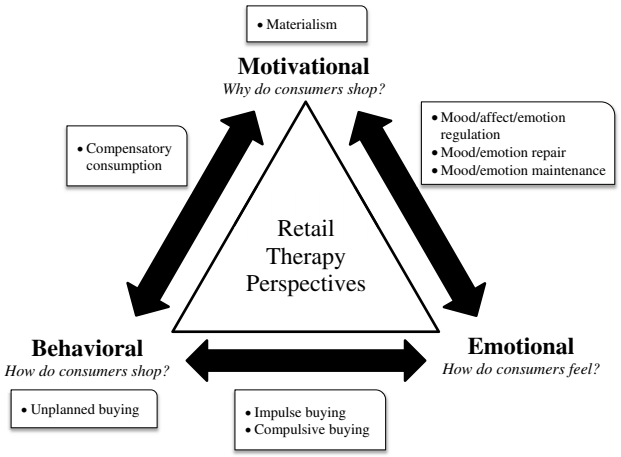

Figure 2.2: Retail therapy and its related constructs.

2014; Larsen, 2000]. Given that *affect*, or an internal feeling state, can take the form of either *moods* (that is, low intensity and diffuse affect whose source is often unidentified) or *emotions* (that is, more specific and differentiated affective states), the corresponding and arguably more precise terms *mood regulation* and *emotion regulation* are often used in the literature. Even more specifically, the term *mood (emotion) repair* has been used to refer to the attempt to improve one's negative moods (emotions), whereas *mood (emotion) maintenance* denotes endeavors to sustain or prolong one's positive moods (emotions) [Gross, 1998; Isen, 1984]. Individuals repair their negative affect by using a variety of strategies [Forgas, 1995; Gross, 2014; Josephson et al., 1996; Parkinson and Totterdell, 1999; Thayer et al., 1994], which include shopping and buying.

2.3.2 Unplanned buying

Unplanned buying, as the name implies, refers to any purchases that have not been planned a priori [Bell et al., 2011; Inman et al., 2009]. A sizable variety of factors can result in a higher incidence of unplanned buying, including low store familiarity [Park et al., 1989],

extended shopping time [Park et al., 1989], low shopping frequency [Inman et al., 2009], a high amount of in-store slack in one's mental budget [Stilley et al., 2010], in-store travel distance [Hui et al., 2013], unexpected price promotions [Heilman et al., 2002], and the presence of special in-store displays [Inman et al., 2009]. Perhaps the factor most pertinent to the present interest in retail therapy is the level of abstraction of consumers' shopping goals. Prior research has shown that having abstract shopping goals (for example, buying something to eat to satisfy one's hunger vs. buying a tuna sandwich) can result in more unplanned buying [Bell et al., 2011; Lee and Ariely, 2006]. To the extent that emotion repair is an abstract shopping goal, the desire for retail therapy can lead to more unplanned purchases.

2.3.3 Impulse buying

Although often used interchangeably with unplanned buying, the term impulse buying (or impulsive buying) is more affect-laden; it refers to a spontaneous desire or powerful urge to make an immediate purchase [Beatty and Elizabeth Ferrell, 1998; Rook, 1987; Rook et al., 1993]. Factors that have been found to result in greater impulse purchases include the depletion of self-control resources [Vohs and Faber, 2007], money and time availability [Beatty and Elizabeth Ferrell, 1998], engagement in experience-focused ongoing search (vs. outcome-focused pre-purchase search) [Bloch et al., 1986], the normative belief that it is appropriate to act on one's impulse [Rook and Fisher, 1995], demographic factors such as culture and age [Kacen and Lee, 2002], and even environmental factors that stimulate the consumer such as perceived crowding or the mere presence of other shoppers [Chen et al., 2011; Luo, 2005; Mattila and Wirtz, 2008]. The degree of impulsive consumption also differs by consumer [Puri, 1996; Zhang and Shrum, 2009] and product type [Bellenger et al., 1978]. To the extent that negative emotions induce the urge to spend, and impulse purchases generate positive feelings of pleasure and excitement [Gardner and Rook, 1988], impulse buying can be concomitant with retail therapy. In the same vein, concurrently having two conflicting goals (for example, the desire to feel better immediately and the goal to save money) has been posited

to undermine control and lead to impulse buying [Baumeister, 2002]. In more extreme cases, impulse buying can turn into *compulsive buying* or *compulsive consumption* where people ("shopaholics") purchase or consume excessively in search of pleasure and gratification from the buying process itself rather than satisfaction from the actual purchased goods [Dittmar et al., 2007; Faber and O'guinn, 1992; O'Guinn and Faber, 1989; Paquet, 2003].

2.3.4 Materialism

Although often associated with compulsive buying, materialism actually refers to the importance that consumers place on worldly possessions [Belk, 1985; Richins and Dawson, 1992; Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003]. The term thus describes a particular consumer value rather than an aspect of consumer behavior. Relating this consumer value with retail therapy, it has been found that a greater self-endorsement of materialism in one's value system is associated with greater emotion enhancement motives in shopping and greater compulsive buying [Dittmar et al., 2007; Richins, 2013].

Some recent work has also shown that the negative emotion of loneliness can result in greater materialism, which, paradoxically, can in turn increase loneliness if treated as a remedy of sadness [Pieters, 2013]. This vicious cycle can be attributed in part to the greater social competitiveness and isolation that consumerism may engender [Bauer et al., 2012].

2.4 Summary

This section defines the concept of *retail therapy*, delineates several scales that researchers have proposed to operationalize the concept, and discusses a number of other theoretically related constructs, hence laying the conceptual foundation for our discussion of the effectiveness of retail therapy in this monograph. In the rest of this monograph, I shall refer to retail therapy as a means to repair negative emotions, referencing these measurement scales and related constructs where appropriate.

3

Of Moods and Motivations: Assessing Retail Therapy Effectiveness from a Motivational Perspective

We begin our investigation of the effectiveness of retail therapy from a motivational perspective. Consumers shop with a variety of goals in mind. Although a shopping trip may not be motivated by the desire to improve one's moods or feelings [cf. Atalay and Meloy, 2011; Kacen and Friese, 1999], it is conceivable that other seemingly unrelated objectives of shopping, whether conscious or non-conscious, can nonetheless confer positive emotional benefits on shoppers, alleviating negative moods and increasing general well-being.

3.1 Shopping goals and motivation — existing taxonomies

A number of different typologies and taxonomies have been proposed to systematically document the various goals and motivations that consumers may have for embarking on a shopping trip. In deriving these taxonomies, researchers have employed a variety of methodologies, ranging from in-depth interviews and field experiments to broad household surveys and consumer questionnaires. These studies also pertain to a variety of shopping contexts (department stores, traditional malls, grocery stores, supermarkets, discount clubs, online and mobile

stores, outlet malls, mail catalogs, airport stores) and relate to the shopping habits of consumers from all over the world. Although much of the research is based on studies conducted at various locations within the United States, other countries where the shopping research has been performed include Australia, Belgium, China, Croatia, Finland, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Qatar, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland, and Tunisia.

Table 3.1 summarizes, in chronological order, the shopping context, research sample, methodology, and the corresponding proposed typology of shopper types and shopping motives documented in some of the main research studies on shopping goals. Despite the diversity in shopping contexts and research methods used in deriving these various taxonomies, they share several common patterns in depicting the varied goals that consumers have for shopping. Broadly, these shopping motives can be described as either personal or social [Tauber, 1972] on one dimension, and serving either hedonic or utilitarian goals [Babin and Griffin, 1994; Childers et al., 2002] on another dimension (see Figure 3.1).

3.2 The role of shopping motives in mood elevation

At first glance, many of the constituent motives in these shopping taxonomies do not seem to pertain at all to the desire to improve one's moods or feelings, and some of them may not even have a hedonic basis. However, a closer examination of the various shopping motivations, whether personal or social, hedonic or utilitarian, suggests that they may generate positive feelings and elevate one's moods in indirect, and perhaps unexpected, ways. I next briefly discuss how the various shopping motives may contribute toward retail therapy effectiveness, drawing upon relevant research in marketing and consumer psychology.

3.2.1 The hedonism of shopping

No doubt, one of the main functions that shopping as an activity may serve is recreation [Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980; Bellenger et al., 1977; Brown et al., 2003; Jones, 1999; Tsang et al., 2004]. Rather than

Table 3.1: Taxonomies of shopper types and motivations.

References	Shopping context	Research sample	Methodology	Typology of shopper types and motivations
Stone [1954]	Large chain department store	124 Adult female married residents in *Chicago*	In-depth interviews	Economic, personalizing, ethical, apathetic
Darden and Reynolds [1971]	Physical stores (local stores, chain stores, large department stores)	167 Housewives from households in six middle to upper middle class suburban areas in *Athens, Georgia*	Survey with 20-item shopper-orientation	
Tauber [1972] (adopted in Parsons [2002] for online shopping, and Mooradian and Olver [1996])	General	30 Respondents in *Los Angeles*; 50% female; age: 20–47	In-depth interviews	Personal (role playing, diversion, self-gratification, learning about new trends, physical activity, sensory stimulation), social (peer group attraction, communication with others having a similar interest, pleasure of bargaining, status and authority)
Darden and Ashton [1974]	Supermarket shopping	116 Middle-class suburban housewives in the United States	Home-interviewed questionnaires	Apathetic shopper, demanding shopper, quality shopper, fastidious shopper, stamp preferer, convenient location shopper, stamp haters
Moschis [1976]	Shopping centers (cosmetics purchase)	206 Female shoppers in *Madison, Wisconsin.*	Mailed questionnaire	Special shopper (shopping for specials), brand-loyal shopper, store-loyal shopper, problem-solving shopper, psycho-socializing shopper, name-conscious shopper
Bellenger et al. [1977] (adopted in Williams et al. [1985])	Shopping centers, malls, department stores	261 Female middle-class shoppers in *Atlanta, Georgia*	In-depth interviews	Convenience (economic), recreational

(*Continued*)

Table 3.1: (*Continued*)

References	Shopping context	Research sample	Methodology	Typology of shopper types and motivations
Zikmund [1977]	Grocery shopping	198 Afro-American households	Personal interviews with questionnaires	Comparative shopper, neighborhood shopper, outshopper
Williams et al. [1978]	Grocery shopping	298 Grocer shoppers in *Salt Lake City, Utah*	Questionnaires	Involved shopper, convenience shopper, price shopper, apathetic (uninvolved) shopper
Westbrook and Black [1985]	Department stores	203 Adult female shoppers in *Tucson, Arizona*	Interviews and questionnaires	Anticipated utility, role enactment, negotiation, choice optimization, affiliation, power & authority, stimulation
Lesser and Hughes [1986]	General	6,818 Respondents across 12 states in the United States; heads of households	Telephone interview; psychographic segmentation	Inactive shoppers, active shoppers, service shoppers, traditional shoppers, dedicated fringe shoppers, price shoppers, transitional shoppers
Dawson et al. [1990]	Outdoor crafts market	278 Shoppers in the *West Coast of the* United States; 64% female	Survey administered at booth	Product motives, experiential motives
Babin and Griffin [1994]; Babin and Darden [1995] (adopted in Childers et al. [2002] with online shopping, and in Karim et al. [2013])	Shopping mall	Focus group: 16 participants in two separate groups (69% female); age: 20–55. Survey: 125 undergraduate students Scale validation: 404 adult residents	Focus group interviews + 53-item survey for scale development + validation (interviews)	Hedonic, utilitarian

(*Continued*)

Table 3.1: (*Continued*)

References	Shopping context	Research sample	Methodology	Typology of shopper types and motivations
Babin and Darden [1995]	Shopping mall	130 Shoppers who shopped at one of ten stores in a major *southeastern* regional mall in the United States	Mall-intercept survey	Action-oriented vs. state-oriented shoppers.
Eastlick and Feinberg [1999]	Mail catalog shopping	458 Respondents (88% female); age: 18–44	Mailed questionnaire	Perceived value, convenience, economic utility, home environment, merchandise assortment, order services, company clientele, information services, salesperson interaction, company responsiveness, company reputation
Reynolds and Beatty [1999]	Retail clothing shopping	364 Respondents with ongoing customer relationship with a clothing/accessories salesperson; 51% female; 53% aged 35-49.	Mailed questionnaire	Happy busy shoppers, challenged shopping lovers, happy social shoppers, capable shopping haters, asocial busy shopping avoiders
Wolfinbarger and Gilly [2001]	Online shopping	64 Participants (across 9 focus groups); MBA students and staff, online panel from Harris Interactive	Focus group interviews	Goal-oriented shopping (convenience, selection, informativeness, lack of sociality), experience-oriented shopping (surprise/excitement/uniqueness, positive sociality, deals, product involvement)
Reynolds et al. [2002]	Traditional malls vs. outlet malls	1097 Shoppers at traditional mall (64% female) and 1,561 shoppers at outlet mall (54% female); both malls in *southeast* United States	Mall-intercept survey	Traditional malls: basic, apathetic, destination, enthusiasts, serious Outlet malls: basic, apathetic, destination, enthusiasts, serious, brand

(*Continued*)

Table 3.1: (*Continued*)

References	Shopping context	Research sample	Methodology	Typology of shopper types and motivations
Arnold and Reynolds [2003] (adopted in Bloch et al. [1994])	Stores and malls (excluding grocery shopping)	98 Non-student respondents (66% female); age: 18–55; 31% completed high school and 33% attended some college; annual income: $20–50K	In-depth interviews and scale development	Shopper segments: minimalists, gatherers, providers, enthusiasts, traditionalists Shopping motivations: adventure shopping, social shopping, gratification shopping, idea shopping, role shopping, value shopping
Moe [2003]	Online store	Clickstream data from online store that sells nutrition products; 7 weeks, 7,143 visit sessions made by 5,730 unique customers	Analysis of clickstream data: categorization of observed in-store navigational patterns	Store visit categories: directed buying, hedonic browsing, search/deliberation, knowledge-building
Brown et al. [2003]	Online retail shopping	437 Internet users from online market research firm (31% female); age: 25–54.	Online questionnaire including measures of convenience, loyalty to local merchants, price consciousness, and purchase intention	Personalizing shoppers, recreational shoppers, economic shoppers, involved shoppers, convenience-oriented recreational shoppers, community-oriented shoppers, apathetic, convenience-oriented shoppers
Geuens et al. [2004]	Airport shops	236 *Belgian* travelers at the *Brussels* airport; 37% female; 42% holiday travelers, 50% business travelers, 8% both holiday and business travelers	Questionnaire	Mood shoppers, apathetic shoppers, shopping lovers Shopping factors: airport related, atmospherics, experiential, functional

(*Continued*)

Table 3.1: (*Continued*)

References	Shopping context	Research sample	Methodology	Typology of shopper types and motivations
Jin and Kim [2003]	Discount stores (E-Mart, Carrefour, Wal-Mart)	452 Married female respondents in *Seoul, Korea*	Store-intercept survey	Leisurely motivated shoppers, socially motivated shoppers, utilitarian shoppers, shopping-apathetic shoppers
Kau et al. [2003]	Online shopping	3,712 online respondents; 94% Reside in *Singapore*; 34% female	Online survey	On–off shopper, comparison shopper, traditional shopper, dual shopper, e-laggard, information surfer
Rohm and Swaminathan [2004]	Online grocery shopping	429 Customers of online grocery retailer in *northeast United States*	Survey	Convenience shoppers, variety seekers, balanced buyers, store-oriented shoppers
Anić and Vouk [2005]	Grocery shopping	243 Shoppers who have made major grocery shopping trips in *Croatia*; 49% female	Questionnaire	Price-driven shoppers, convenience-oriented shoppers, involved shoppers, price-driven shoppers
Jamal et al. [2006]	Food and grocery shopping	400 Convenience-sample respondents in *Doha, Qatar*; 54% female; 80% aged 20–39.	Survey	Shopper types: socializing shoppers, disloyal shoppers, independent perfectionist shoppers, escapist shoppers, budget-conscious shoppers Shopping motivations: gratification seeking, social shopping, high quality seeking, confused by choice, value shopping, brand loyal/habitual, brand conscious, utilitarian, hedonic shopping, role playing
Rintamäki et al. [2006]	Department store	364 Shoppers at the second largest department store in *Finland*; 54% female	Store-intercept questionnaire	Hedonic (entertainment, exploration), utilitarian (monetary savings, convenience), social (status, self-esteem)

(*Continued*)

Table 3.1: (*Continued*)

References	Shopping context	Research sample	Methodology	Typology of shopper types and motivations
Millan and Howard [2007]	Shopping mall	355 Shoppers at seven large shopping centers in five major cities in *Hungary*; 54% female	Mall-intercept survey	Relaxed utilitarians, strict utilitarians, committed shoppers, browsers
Ganesh et al. [2007]	Traditional mall, factory outlet mall, national discount mass-merchandiser chain, national category killer chain	Traditional mall: 968 Outlet mall: 868 Discount store: 407 Category killer: 476	Shopper-intercept survey	Apathetic, enthusiasts, destination, basic, bargain seekers
Wagner [2007]	Department store	40 Shoppers in a large department store in *Switzerland*; 64% female	Store-intercept laddering interviews	Frictionless shopping, shopping pleasure, value seeking, quality seeking
Cardoso and Pinto [2010]	General	219 Undergraduates in *Portugal*; 56.6% female; aged 18–35	Survey	Shopping dimensions: Pleasure and gratification shopping, idea shopping, social shopping, role shopping, value shopping, achievement, and efficiency Shopper types: social, dynamic, pragmatic, moderate involved

(*Continued*)

Table 3.1: (*Continued*)

References	Shopping context	Research sample	Methodology	Typology of shopper types and motivations
Wagner and Rudolph [2010]	General	503 Consumers from national online panel; 50% female	Survey	Three hierarchical levels of shopping motivation: purpose-specific (task fulfillment, recreation), activity-specific (efficiency shopping, sensory stimulation, inspiration, gratification, gift shopping, socialization, bargain hunting), demand-specific (service convenience, store atmosphere, assortment innovation, assortment uniqueness, personnel friendliness)
Ganesh et al. [2010]	Online shopping	3,059 Online respondents from web panel (67% female) with the various age groups and income levels well-represented	33-Item questionnaire	Shopper segments: interactive, destination, apathetic, e-Window shopper, basic, bargain seekers, shopping enthusiast Shopping motivation: role enactment, online bidding/haggling, web shopping convenience, avant-gardism, affiliation, stimulation, personalized services
Mejri et al. [2012]	Physical store shopping	655 Shoppers in *Tunisia*; 53% female	Face-to-face survey	Types of shopping trips: planned, recreational, light fill-in, ordinary fill-in

	Personal	**Social**
Hedonic	Self-gratification/recreation Diversion Sensory stimulation	Social interaction Bargaining/haggling Power & authority
Utilitarian	Economic/convenience Learning Physical activity	Role playing/enactment

Figure 3.1: The two dimensions of shopping goals.

simply a means to an end (that is, the purchase or acquisition of goods and services), shopping can serve as a form of leisure and be an end of its own. Compared to function-oriented shopping (that is, shopping as an instrumental means to acquire products), recreational shopping is typically associated with longer shopping hours, a lower likelihood of having concrete shopping goals, and a higher propensity to shop with others and to continue shopping even after making a purchase [Bellenger et al., 1978].

Many factors potentially contribute toward the generation of hedonic value for consumers engaging in a leisurely stroll through the mall. First, shopping can be a source of positive distraction, allowing one to forget, albeit temporarily, one's worldly concerns and worries even without any actual purchase [Kang and Johnson, 2010; Nolen-Hoeksema and Morrow, 1993]. Second, this attention diversion is bolstered by the often copious amount of sensory stimulation and extensive assortment of products on display to which the consumer is exposed while shopping [Arnold and Reynolds, 2003; Chernev, 2011; De Nisco and Warnaby, 2014; Kotler, 1973; Krishna, 2009; 2012; Spies et al., 1997; Tai and Fung, 1997; Tauber, 1972; Turley and Milliman, 2000; Underhill, 2000]. Recent research supports the common wisdom that consumers who are impulsive in disposition are more distracted by non-focal items that are unrelated to their shopping goals [Büttner et al., 2014]. Third, a significant source of enjoyment in shopping lies in the feelings of excitement and anticipation that one may chance upon an item that one desires but may not have specifically planned to buy [Falk and Campbell, 1993]. Last but not least, with actual purchases, particularly those that are unplanned or made on a whim, "consummatory indulgence" or

the autonomous ability to buy what the heart pleases may afford one with feelings of freedom from any psychological encumbrances [Falk and Campbell, 1993; Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2001; Woodruffe, 1997; Woodruffe-Burton and Wakenshaw, 2011].

Given that shopping can generate much hedonic value, several researchers have examined the impact of shopping as a mood-repair solution. For instance, Luomala [2002], based on a phenomenological analysis of consumers in Finland, identifies shopping as one of the consumption activities that provide therapeutic power through attentional distraction, self-indulgence, and behavioral activation (or dejection alleviation). In the same vein, Atalay and Meloy [2011] demonstrate that shopping is often a strategic endeavor that consumers employ to manage their moods and that consumers are inclined to reward themselves with self-treats when they experience negative moods. By asking participants to complete a consumption diary over a two-week period, the researchers also found that these self-treats can provide sustained reparative benefits to consumers even though the purchase of these products may be unplanned.

3.2.2 Planning and shopping goal satisfaction

Certainly, not everyone enjoys shopping. Some people may even regard shopping (especially grocery shopping) as a laborious but necessary chore. Indeed, many consumers shop only when they have a particular goal in mind, while others may facilitate their weekly (or monthly!) grocery shopping by drawing together a shopping list prior to stepping into the store or adhering to an implicit standard script while shopping [Block and Morwitz, 1999; Thomas and Garland, 2004]. The reliance on such lists and scripts may also explain why certain online stores are especially effective in retaining customers once they have acquired them (for example, *FreshDirect*). These online stores not only provide the reluctant shopper with much convenience but also raise (perceived) switching costs and reduce brand switching [Degeratu et al., 2000].

However, even in such cases where shopping is planned and supposedly serves a more mundane or utilitarian purpose, it can still, perhaps ironically, allow one to experience feelings of joy. In particular, the

satisfaction of goals (shopping goals included) is often accompanied by a sense of accomplishment, which can in turn engender feelings of competency and efficacy [Carver and Scheier, 1981; 1990]. Rather than feelings of *anticipation* as in recreational shopping, the satisfaction of one's *expectation* contributes primarily to the feelings of joy that consumers may experience with planned shopping [Falk and Campbell, 1993].

3.2.3 Deal proneness and bargain hunting — the smart-shopper mindset

To some consumers, perhaps one of the main attractions of shopping lies in the ability to enjoy price discounts and other marketing perks and promotions [Cox et al., 2005; Lichtenstein et al., 1990; 1997; Neslin, 2002; Schneider and Currim, 1991; Webster Jr, 1965]. While these monetary (or non-monetary) benefits certainly allow shoppers to receive some economic gains, they could also enhance consumers' shopping experience via at least two important psychological mechanisms [Chandon et al., 2000]. First, sales promotions satisfy many consumers' innate hunter-gatherer motive in shopping [Arnold and Reynolds, 2003] such that consumers experience intrinsic pleasure when they are able to locate hard-to-find deals. Such pleasure can also boost shoppers' transaction utility, or the perception that they have gotten a good deal [Lichtenstein et al., 1990]. Second, the knowledge that one has enjoyed a good deal can also fuel the smart-shopper mindset, or the feeling that one is an astute shopper; this self-esteem-boosting mindset potentially leads to increased brand or product loyalty and positive word-of-mouth [Schindler, 1989; 1998].

Arguably, the prevalent use of promotions and loss leaders to lure customers into the store by many marketers and retailers can significantly foster these positive consumer feelings toward sales promotions. However, it is noteworthy that some research also suggests potentially deleterious long-term effects of sales promotions. For instance, price discounts, in particular, can nurture hordes of cherry pickers and deal-prone shoppers [Fox and Hoch, 2005; Webster Jr, 1965], increasing price sensitivity and lowering price expectations [Kalwani and Yim,

1992; Mela et al., 1997; Papatla and Krishnamurthi, 1996]. More recent research also suggests that price promotions can increase consumer impatience through the activation of a reward-seeking mindset [Naylor et al., 2006; Shaddy and Lee, 2012], as well as negatively impact consumption enjoyment if shoppers do not consume the discounted products that they have purchased immediately [Lee and Tsai, 2014].

3.2.4 Learning

Knowing the best store or lowest-price retailer from which to buy a product, which is associated with the smart-shopper mindset, may be part of a more general source of shopping satisfaction — the joy of learning. Consumers may experience intrinsic satisfaction from acquiring information about the newest stores on the block or the latest product trends and innovation beyond mere prices, or where the "best" places to buy particular products would be. In fact, some consumers shop specifically with such motives in mind even if they were to return home empty handed. Rather than "shopping for" particular items, consumers, especially those identified as "market mavens," "shop around" to increase their pool of knowledge about the marketplace [Clark and Goldsmith, 2005; Price et al., 1988].

3.2.5 The joy of bargaining and competition

While most retail outlets have evolved into their modern form where consumers shop from a variety of products on display with clearly labeled prices, many retail contexts and locations in the world seem to have retained the bartering spirit of traditional trade practices such that sale bargaining remains a norm. Although possibly more effortful and less time-efficient for both the buyer and the seller to arrive at a closing price and to agree to trade, the practice of bargaining can also encourage trade by enhancing the likelihood of a match between the seller's willingness-to-sell price and the buyer's willingness-to-pay price.

Importantly, related to our present interest in retail therapy, many shoppers also derive much satisfaction from the process of price haggling despite the increase in transaction costs (largely time) [Arnold

and Reynolds, 2003; Ganesh et al., 2010; Tauber, 1972]. At least two psychological factors are potentially at work here. First, the bargaining shopper may perceive the price which she eventually pays for a product to be lower having saved some amount from the initial asking price, thus increasing transaction utility. Second, the very effort that she has invested into the bargaining process can also bolster the aforementioned smart-shopper mindset. The ensuing satisfaction that the shopper thus obtains from closing the sales transaction enhances her enjoyment of the shopping experience that may, in turn, positively influence her satisfaction with the purchased item through emotional contagion. The gratification that the bargaining shopper obtains from perceiving herself as a smart shopper may also reflect a certain degree of joy from winning the "competition," with competition here referring either to the seller (from having "beaten the system" to obtain the lowest price possible) or to other buyers (from possibly having paid a lower price than fellow shoppers) [see also Shubik, 1970].

The positive feelings that shoppers may obtain from this latter competitive mindset potentially explain the success of other more contemporary modes of shopping such as online auctions and, more recently, the "name-your-own-price" format. eBay (2014), the most popular online auction website, reported an astounding 21% growth in enabled commerce volume to $212 billion last year [2013]. Both of these shopping models have attracted much interest among academics who seek to examine the economic impact and psychological underpinnings of these new models [Ariely and Simonson, 2003; Gneezy et al., 2012; Heyman et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2014; Santana and Morwitz, 2015; Terwiesch et al., 2005].

3.2.6 Social interactions

To many consumers, shopping is essentially a social experience. In times of sadness, individuals' desire for social connectedness is often amplified [Gray et al., 2011]. Hence, we can perhaps appreciate many of the potential emotional benefits of shopping by viewing it as a social activity.

In his seminal work on shopping, Tauber [1972] distinguishes between two main categories of shopping motives — personal versus social (see Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1). The social benefits of shopping can take various forms. Certainly, shopping, especially for recreational purposes [Bellenger et al., 1978], represents an opportunity for individuals to get together with their friends and family, fostering relationship building and general well-being. Even when shopping alone, being in a retail environment with other like-minded consumers with similar interests could increase shopping satisfaction, encourage social interactions, or even strengthen brand communities [Borges et al., 2010]. Even less "friendly" interactions with fellow shoppers, as in the case of an online auction, can also generate excitement during the shopping process and lead to joy when one eventually wins the auction [Lee et al., 2013]. More generally, some research has shown that the mere presence of crowds or perceived crowding can increase shopping satisfaction [Eroglu et al., 2005].

Apart from their own shopping companions and other fellow shoppers, consumers may also interact with members of the sales staff. Some shoppers may derive pleasure from the attention that they receive from these pampering sales assistants, and perceive a sense of psychological power from being served and waited on [Tauber, 1972].

Nonetheless, some recent research has shown that there are limits in the degree to which having a shopping companion increases shopping satisfaction [Borges et al., 2010]. In particular, when shoppers have a high degree of identification with a store such that they perceive other shoppers to be similar to them, they tend to enjoy shopping at the store more when they shop alone or with a friend compared to shopping with a family member. When the number of non-interacting fellow shoppers increase, however, consumers are also more likely to experience negative feelings [Argo et al., 2005].

Furthermore, shopping with others may increase consumers' overall spending [Cheng et al., 2013; Mangleburg et al., 2004], particularly when the shopper is agency-oriented (vs. communion-oriented) and high in self-monitoring [Kurt et al., 2011] or when the shopping

companion is of the opposite sex [Sommer et al., 1992]. The mere presence of other shoppers can also increase impulse purchases [Luo, 2005].

3.2.7 Power and control

An important psychological need potentially underlies many of the determinants of shopping satisfaction discussed above — the need for power and control [Inesi et al., 2011]. It should nonetheless be noted that while *control* (similar to "effectance" or "self-determination") refers to experiencing oneself as an agent producing desired outcomes in the environment, *power* refers to having influence over other individuals' resources and outcomes [Deci and Ryan, 1985; Keltner et al., 2003; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959]. Thus, control can be conceived as a broader concept than power. In the shopping context, individual actions such as finding out about the latest brands and product trends and buying the items that one desires without constraints affords one with greater perceived control. In comparison, social encounters such as overtaking other shoppers in successfully bidding for a limited-supply item, and being served and waited upon by a store's sales assistants confers a momentary sense of power. Be it through providing a greater sense of control or power, shopping may generate positive feelings and promote general well-being [Keltner et al., 2003; Langer, 1975; Langer and Rodin, 1976; Rodin and Langer, 1977; Burger, 1989].

Yet another source of control could be derived from the mere act of deciding which stores to visit and which brands/products to buy [Rick et al., 2014]. I explore this possibility further in the next section.

3.3 Summary

Although consumers may not go on a shopping trip with the explicit goal to repair their negative feelings, a variety of shopping goals that they do have might contribute indirectly toward emotion enhancement. Drawing upon a wide selection of taxonomies of shopping motivations

that marketing scholars have proposed, we can categorize these shopping goals along two general dimensions: personal versus social goals, and hedonic versus utilitarian goals. How several of these goals can help ameliorate one's negative feelings are discussed: the hedonic value of shopping, satisfaction of planned shopping goals, deals and bargain hunting, the joy of learning about the marketplace, the pleasure of bargaining and competing with fellow shoppers, social interactions, and attaining psychological power and control through shopping.

4

While You Are Shopping: Assessing Retail Therapy Effectiveness from a Behavioral Perspective

In this section, instead of focusing on the motivations that consumers may have for shopping, I examine, at the individual level, the various activities in which consumers typically engage during the shopping process, and explore how these activities can increase positive feelings and allow consumers to achieve retail therapy. A similar behavior-based approach has been adopted by several researchers in the study of shopping albeit at different levels of specificity [Kang and Johnson, 2010; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Rick et al., 2014]. For instance, Kang and Johnson [2010] examine consumers' pre-shopping, shopping, and post-shopping experiences, while Rick et al. [2014] consider the specific components of a shopping episode: browsing, interacting with salespeople, choosing, paying, acquiring, and consuming.

Inevitably, shoppers may have specific motives that correspond to each of these activities, and these motives, in turn, may contribute toward positive emotions and well-being, as discussed in the previous section. In such cases, I shall be brief in the present discussion; instead, I focus on the particular sources of psychological value in shopping that adopting this behavioral perspective illuminates.

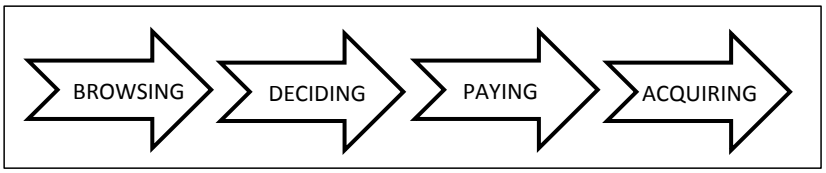

Figure 4.1: A stylized view of the shopping process.

4.1 Mapping the stages of the shopping process

Many shopping episodes traverse the following main stages (see Figure 4.1): browsing the items available in a store, deciding which brand or product to buy, paying for the selected product, and finally, acquiring the product as its new rightful owner [Rick et al., 2014]. While this stylized process is typical of many shopping encounters, there are clearly many exceptions. For instance, some shoppers may have a concrete goal in mind even before entering a store [Lee and Ariely, 2006], hence bypassing the first two stages of the process. Other consumers may either window shop without any desire to make a purchase [Bloch and Richins, 1983; Bloch et al., 1989; Ganesh et al., 2010; Moe, 2003], or decide not to purchase anything after browsing, thus omitting the latter two stages of the above process.

In this section, I examine how each of these individual stages of the stylized shopping process may highlight particular aspects of shopping that could increase consumers' positive feelings and offer retail therapy benefits.

4.1.1 Browsing

When consumers browse the products that are on display in a store, they may either do this with a product or shopping goal in mind (utilitarian browsing) or simply enjoy the hedonic experience and benefits from the browsing process [hedonic browsing; Bloch et al., 1989]. These two forms of browsing have also been referred to as pre-purchase search and ongoing search, respectively [Bloch et al., 1986], and they differ in

several aspects besides their association with different objectives. For instance, hedonic browsing, compared to utilitarian browsing, has been linked to more impulse purchases and greater product (vs. purchase) involvement [Bloch et al., 1986; Moe, 2003; Park et al., 2012].

No doubt, given that consumers engage in utilitarian browsing to satisfy an instrumental purchase goal, the ability to satisfy the goal brings about satisfaction and a sense of goal achievement [Carver and Scheier, 1981; 1990]. However, hedonic browsing can also engender many psychological benefits for consumers. Consistent with this claim, hedonic browsers have been found to exhibit a higher level of self-confidence and social extraversion; they also report greater purchase satisfaction and lower levels of dissonance [Jarboe and McDaniel, 1987]. These browsers who may not shop with a concrete goal in mind also tend to have greater interest in and knowledge of the searched product category and often serve as opinion leaders for other consumers [Bloch and Richins, 1983].

Hedonic browsing can increase positive feelings via two different mechanisms. First, as discussed in a previous section, finding out about the latest brands and trends in the marketplace can engender a sense of control by helping consumers build a bank of product information. This information bank mentally prepares consumers for future consumption needs and thus reduces shopping anxiety [Bloch et al., 1986]. Second, hedonic browsing, despite not being tied to an instrumental purchase goal, also allows consumers to engage in self-discovery. Through browsing the products on display and evaluating their preferences, consumers can derive inherent pleasure from learning about what they like and dislike [He et al., 2013].

In-store browsing can also generate positive feelings through consumers' direct and indirect interaction with the extant shopping environment. Be it the soothing sounds of Bach's harpsichord concertos or the freshening fragrances of citrus and fresh linen in the air, shoppers engage with the retail atmosphere in a multisensory manner. Such sensory stimulation may influence how consumers think and feel in myriad ways [Inman, 2001; Krishna, 2009; 2012; Ng, 2003; Tai and Fung, 1997; Tauber, 1972; Turley and Milliman, 2000; Zwebner et al., 2014] and

provide consumers with positive hedonic benefits such as relaxation and rejuvenation.

A more specific type of browsing, bargain hunting also constitutes one of the main pleasures of shopping [Cox et al., 2005; Schindler, 1989]. Apart from economic benefits, bargain hunting promotes positive feelings associated with both the hunter-gatherer and smart-shopper mindsets. Sales promotions also trigger positive product evaluations [Naylor et al., 2006], increase total purchase and unplanned consumption [Heilman et al., 2002], and enhance consumption enjoyment of the products under promotion through emotional contagion [Lee and Tsai, 2014].

4.1.2 Deciding

Shopping typically requires the consumer to make a series of choices: where to shop, whom to shop with, how long to shop for, and eventually (for most shoppers who are not merely window shoppers), whether to buy and what to buy. Despite being sometimes cognitively demanding, these shopping-related decisions can promote feelings of self-efficacy and enhance one's sense of control [Langer, 1975; Rick et al., 2014], alleviating negative moods of sadness and promoting general well-being. Relatedly, giving people the ability to choose attenuates the negative effects of sadness on consumption such as binge eating and overspending [Garg and Lerner, 2013].

This emotional therapeutic effect of shopping, however, may not generalize to negative feelings of anger. Unlike sadness, anger tends to be caused by others and may not be ameliorated by reinstating one's control over the environment [Rick et al., 2014].

4.1.3 Paying

Following the decision to buy a product, the natural next step is to pay for the product. Financial disbursement has been linked to the psychological "pain of paying" [Prelec and Loewenstein, 1998] and thus may negatively affect one's moods during shopping. This "pain of paying" is consistent with the activation of the insula in neuropsychology prior to a purchase transaction [Knutson et al., 2007], and is especially pronounced among "tightwads" who are therefore often reluctant to spend

[Rick et al., 2008]. Yet, this psychological pain can be buffered by the anticipatory joy and benefits of consuming the purchased product later, which explains the strong preference for prepayment schemes to post-consumption payment arrangements in the marketplace [Patrick and Park, 2006; Prelec and Loewenstein, 1998].

Further, prior research suggests that different modes of payment can be associated with different degrees of psychological pain [Raghubir and Srivastava, 2008; Thomas et al., 2011]. For instance, compared to cash, credit cards render the payment outflow less transparent and can therefore alleviate the "pain of paying" [Loewenstein and O'Donoghue, 2006]. Consequently, credit-card payment can induce greater spending and fewer negative feelings associated with shopping transactions. The availability of attractive reward programs tied to credit card transactions can further encourage spending and generate shopping satisfaction [Oliver, 2010; Wirtz et al., 2007].

Regardless of the payment method, spending money can induce greater feelings of self-sufficiency [Vohs et al., 2006]. However, spending money on others has been shown to generate greater happiness than spending money on oneself [Dunn et al., 2008].

4.1.4 Acquiring

Paying for a product results in the transfer of the product's ownership to the payer. More generally, shopping allows consumers to own products that generate hedonic value in various ways. While buying and consuming hedonic experiential goods such as chocolates and vacations are naturally accompanied by positive feelings, the purchase of products with specific characteristics can also afford hedonic value in less direct ways. In particular, in response to situational perceived psychosocial deficiencies, consumers may purchase specific types of products to compensate for these perceived deficiencies [Dichter, 1960; Gronmo, 1988; Sivanathan and Pettit, 2010; Woodruffe, 1997; Woodruffe-Burton and Elliott, 2005]. That is, these consumers may be consuming the symbolic meaning of the products rather than the physical products themselves.

Examples of such compensatory purchases are aplenty: consumers buy conspicuous high-status products when they feel powerless [Rucker

and Galinsky, 2008] or when they experience self-threat [Sivanathan and Pettit, 2010], products that boost their self concept when their confidently held self-view is shaken [Gao et al., 2009], and both utilitarian products and products that are tangibly bounded (for example, a framed picture instead of an unframed picture) when they perceive a loss of control over the environment [Chen et al., 2010; 2011; Cutright, 2012]. Such reactive compensatory consumption differs from proactive compensatory consumption since they are engaged after, not before, one experiences a self-threat, and tend to be driven by the goal of distraction [Kim and Rucker, 2012]. In other words, consumers purchase these products with specific qualities to distract themselves from self-awareness, thus alleviating the negative impact of the experienced self-threat. This is akin to Kacen's [1994] notion of a "fresh start" or a "rebirth" that motivates product acquisition as ownership of new items helps one to "forget about the old things," while the pleasure from shopping may "distract us from our negative feelings and provide a happier, more positive focus" (p. 522).

Nonetheless, some recent work suggests that such "within-domain compensation" (such as buying a copy of *Scientific American* after one's intelligence has been undermined), compared to "across-domain compensation" (such as buying a copy of the *Creativity* magazine instead), could trigger more ruminative thinking about the threat rather than distracting them from the source of their self-threat [Lisjak et al., 2015]. A further exploration of the boundaries of this effect would be worthwhile to better understand the effectiveness of compensatory consumption in retail therapy.

The term "acquisitive buying" has been introduced recently into the consumer behavior literature [Bose et al., 2013]. It refers to an ostensibly compulsive form of buying (such as buying the fourteenth pair of white t-shirts) but is somewhat controlled in that the "acquisitive buyer" is able to differentiate among the seemingly similar products in minute ways. Such product acquisition or ownership is believed to enhance the buyer's preparedness for specific product-use occasions in the future and therefore provide her with a sense of control. Acquisitive buying is conceptually distinct from materialism. Unlike acquisitive

buyers who do not experience buyer's remorse, high-materialism (vs. low-materialism) consumers tend to consistently experience emotional fluctuations during the shopping process, with their product-evoked emotions elevating before buying and declining after purchase [Richins, 2013]. These high-materialism consumers generally derive more pleasure from anticipating and desiring a product than from owning the product itself.

4.2 Summary

Instead of considering the overarching goals that consumers might have for shopping, this section delves into the specific stages of a stylized shopping process, examining how the constituent activities at each stage of shopping can contribute toward emotion enhancement and greater well-being. These stages include: browsing, choosing, paying, and acquiring. Beyond this stylized process, future work could explore how other activities that consumers may engage in while shopping, such as passing time and people watching, could impact consumers' emotions and shopping experience [Bloch et al., 1994; Bowlby, 2000].

5

Fleeting Feelings: Assessing Retail Therapy Effectiveness from an Emotional Perspective

From excitement and curiosity to guilt and contentment, a consumer's experience during the shopping process can be replete with a range of feelings and emotions. A better understanding of the presence of these various affective states during shopping could offer greater insight into the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of retail therapy.

5.1 Affective drivers and consequences of shopping

While there has been much work in the psychology and decision-making literature on how emotions affect consumers' decisions and decision-making processes (see Cohen et al. [2008] for a comprehensive review) there has been relatively less work on the changing emotional states while consumers shop, particularly when they shop with the specific objective of regulating their negative emotions and achieving retail therapy.

Table 5.1 summarizes, in chronological order, some of the main findings of past research that lies at the intersection of shopping and emotions. These research programs examine the specific emotional drivers

Table 5.1: Summary of past research on shopping and emotions.

References	Emotion(s) examined	Methodology	Key findings
Mick and DeMoss [1990]	Open-ended (qualitative)	Survey with unstructured questions and content analysis. $N = 287$; 51% female; sample comprised students and non-students (43%)	• Respondents reported feeling "renewed" and "refreshed when asked to describe an acquisition "to cheer yourself [themselves] up because you [they] were feeling down." Guilt and regret were rarely mentioned.
Elliott [1994]	Excited-calm, depressed-happy, anxious, guilty	In-depth interviews ($N = 15$) and mail survey ($N = 46$) of self-identified addictive female buyers who tended to use shopping as a means to repair negative moods	• Respondents reported feeling excitement before and during shopping, but guilt and anxiety after arriving home with their purchases.
Faber and Christenson [1996]	Happy, sad/depressed, angry, irritable, excited, anxious, bored	Questionnaire administered to 24 respondents who qualified as compulsive buyers (92% female) and 24 control respondents who were not compulsive buyers.	• Compared to a control group, compulsive buyers were more likely to experience all the enquired mood states (both positive and negative, except happy) before deciding to go shopping, and the more extreme moods (sad/depressed, angry, excited, anxious) while shopping. • *Positive moods (happy, excited)*: compulsive buyers reported experiencing these moods more during shopping than prior to shopping, while control consumers were more likely to experience these moods prior to than during shopping. • *Negative moods (sad/depressed, angry, irritable, anxious, bored)*: compulsive buyers reported experiencing these moods more before shopping than during shopping, while comparison consumers were more likely to experience these moods during than before shopping.

(*Continued*)

Table 5.1: (*Continued*)

References	Emotion(s) examined	Methodology	Key findings
Spies et al. [1997]	Adjectives for elated, depressed, angry moods [SES; Hampel, 1977]	Field surveys conducted at two IKEA stores in Germany ($N = 152$; 76 per store); respondents' moods were assessed three times: first at the entrance, second after they had passed the exhibition area, and finally before they left the store.	• Compared to a less pleasant store (dilapidated, disorganized store configuration), shopping in a more pleasant store (modern and organized) improves consumers' moods, increases shopping satisfaction, and induces more spontaneous purchase of liked items.
Luomala and Laaksonen [1999]	Open-ended (qualitative)	Thematic interviews (antecedents, process, and consequences of mood-regulatory self-gifting behaviors) and qualitative analysis; $N = 28$, female, aged 21–48.	• Participants reported engaging in self-gifting behavior for different reasons under positive and negative moods: to reward themselves when they feel good, but to repair/alleviate negative feelings when they feel bad. Only a few participants thought they engaged in self-gifting behavior to prolong or improve their already existing good moods. • Participants generally regarded their mood-regulatory self-gifting behaviors as successful and described their post-success positive feelings in vivid ways (relaxed, satisfied, happy, relieved, positive, calm, harmonic, uplifting). However, their original negative moods were usually attenuated, not entirely erased. Also, intense negative moods often could not be repaired through self-gifting, and unsuccessful mood-reparatory self-gifting behaviors were accompanied by feelings of guilt, frustration, and regret, and may even aggravate.

(*Continued*)

Table 5.1: (*Continued*)

References	Emotion(s) examined	Methodology	Key findings
Clark and Calleja [2008]	Open-ended (qualitative)	In-depth interview of 8 university students (Malta) who qualified as compulsive shoppers in initial screening test; aged 19–30.	• Compulsive buyers often use shopping as a way to elevate their moods. They often experience extreme positive/negative mood fluctuations while shopping: a sense of exhilaration (a quick fix) to reach a heightened state of arousal, followed quickly by feelings of remorse.
Herabadi et al. [2009]	Open-ended	Multi-method approach: (A) interview of 103 shoppers at a large department store in Indonesia (65% female, aged 17–61) immediately after they had made a purchase; (B) two-part study with 77 undergraduates in Indonesia (83% female, aged 19–24) in which participants kept a shopping diary for 3 consecutive days.	• *Impulsive buying* was accompanied by positive feelings of high arousal (excitement, urge, attracted, in love, enthusiastic) while *contemplative buying* with feelings of low arousal (pleased, relieved, interested, contented, nothing special).
Atalay and Meloy [2011]	Mood (valence), loneliness	220 Adult shoppers at a shopping mall responded to survey before and after they shopped (69% female, average age: 34).	• Less happy shoppers were more likely to make unplanned self-treat purchases; loneliness was unrelated to the purchase of self-treats.
	Happy/good/ pleased/cheerful	Lab experiment with 2 (mood: positive vs. negative) × 2 (goal of restraint vs. no-goal) between-subjects design; $N = 118$ undergraduates	• Participants who were initially in a bad mood experienced more positive moods after indulging in unplanned consumption of self-treats (that is, chocolate candies); those with the goal of restraint were able to use the achievement of that goal to repair their moods instead.

(*Continued*)

Table 5.1: (*Continued*)

References	Emotion(s) examined	Methodology	Key findings
	Positive and negative affect schedule [PANAS; Watson et al., 1988], guilt, regret	69 Undergraduates completed two consumption diaries over a two-week period: first diary examined the events leading to the purchase of a self-treat; second diary tracked respondents' post-purchase feelings toward the self-treat.	• Both mood repair and celebratory treats led to post-purchase mood improvements regardless of whether purchase was planned or unplanned. • No evidence of increased guilt or regret (buyer's remorse) and product-return attempts following the purchase of self-treats for mood repair or celebratory reasons.
Kemp and Kopp [2011]	Contentment, fear/anxiety	Lab experiment: 96 college students randomly assigned to one of three mood conditions: *contentment*, *fear/anxiety*, *neutral* and responded to question about impulsive purchase intention	• Participants in both the *contentment* and *fear/anxiety* conditions were more likely to purchase impulsively than those in the *neutral* condition, but for different reasons supposedly — mood maintenance and mood repair, respectively.
	Sadness, amusement	Lab experiment: 3 (mood: amusement, sadness, neutral) $\times$ 2 (cognitive reappraisal: high vs. low) between-subjects; $N = 167$.	• Participants in both the *amusement* and *sadness* conditions were more likely to purchase impulsively than those in the *neutral* condition. For participants in the *sadness* condition, those with low (vs. high) cognitive reappraisals had stronger preference for the focal hedonic product, presumably because they were less able to access their internal processes or to self-medicate in order to regulate their negative emotions (and hence enlist external means).

(*Continued*)

Table 5.1: (*Continued*)

References	Emotion(s) examined	Methodology	Key findings
López and de Maya [2012]	Happiness, sadness	Two lab experiments: (A) 3 (mood: positive, negative, neutral) × 2 (valence of hedonic product: positive, negative) between-subjects; $N = 147$ undergrads; (B) 2 (mood: positive, negative) × 3 (valence of external product review: positive, negative, no-info) between-subjects.	• When participants were in a negative (vs. positive) mood, they were more likely to buy a positive hedonic product, but not a negative hedonic product. However, the influence of product reviews dominated their desire to repair their moods such that they were more likely to be influenced by the valence of the product reviews rather than their own mood states.
Clarke and Mortimer [2013]	Regret	Online survey in Australia and structural equation modeling; $N = 307$, 75% female, aged 18–45.	• Participants expected to experience post-purchase regret from buying self-gifts to cheer themselves up (for example, retail therapy) and for celebratory (for example, birthday, Christmas) reasons, but not from buying the gifts to reward themselves for an achievement or from the hedonic enjoyment of shopping for the product.
Pieters [2013]	Loneliness	Longitudinal data from online consumer panel administered in the Netherlands over six years; surveys measured materialism and loneliness in five waves; $N = 2,789$.	• Loneliness leads to more materialism; conversely, valuing possessions as a happiness medicine or as a measure of success increases loneliness (resulting in a "material trap"), but seeking possessions for material mirth (acquisition centrality, luxury, or the joy of spending money on impractical things) decreases loneliness.

(*Continued*)

Table 5.1: (*Continued*)

References	Emotion(s) examined	Methodology	Key findings
Rick et al. [2014]	Sadness/ depression, amusement, rage, indifference, anger, happiness	Three lab experiments: (A) After watching a sad video clip, participants were randomly assigned to either the Choosing condition or the Browsing condition; mood was accessed at three different times; $N = 100$, 52% female, mean age = 36; (B) 2 (mood: sadness, anger) × 2 (agency: personal control, situation control) between-subjects design; following emotion induction, participants completed shopping task with agency manipulation; $N = 147$; (C) 3 (mood: sadness, anger, neutral) × 2 (agency: personal control, situation control) between-subjects design; $N = 301$ undergrads; 51% female.	• Residual sadness (final score — baseline score) was significantly lower among participants (*choosers*) who were asked to choose which products they would like to buy compared to pure *browsers*. • Residual sadness in the *sadness* conditions (participants watched a sad movie clip) was significantly lower among participants who had control over their outcomes (*personal control*) than among participants who did not have control over their outcomes (*situational control*). Residual anger in the anger conditions (participants watched a movie clip that induced anger) did not differ between conditions. Both residual sadness and residual anger did not differ in the *neutral* conditions (participants watched a documentary clip) regardless of whether control was personal or situational.

of retail therapy, the effectiveness and emotional impact of retail therapy, as well as factors that determine retail therapy success. The studies were conducted with both regular shoppers (both students and non-student individuals) as well as consumers who had been clinically diagnosed as addictive or compulsive buyers and who had a propensity to rely excessively on shopping as a means to repair their negative feelings. They also employed a variety of methods, including in-depth interviews, shopping diary analysis, longitudinal behavioral analysis, lab experiments, online surveys, and field studies conducted in malls and department stores.

5.2 Main themes in research on shopping and emotions

Several themes emerge from these research findings that are especially relevant to our present focus on retail therapy:

(a) *Self-gifting and impulse buying*: A number of empirical findings support the common wisdom that consumers often shop with the objective of achieving retail therapy [Atalay and Meloy, 2011; Kemp and Kopp, 2011; López and de Maya, 2012; Luomala and Laaksonen, 1999]. To repair their negative moods, consumers may engage in self-gifting or unplanned/impulse buying. Furthermore, happy shoppers may also buy themselves gifts to maintain their already positive feelings [Kemp and Kopp, 2011; Luomala and Laaksonen, 1999]. Such behavior is not restricted to addictive or compulsive shoppers.

(b) *Success of retail therapy*: Shoppers who seek retail therapy generally find shopping effective in helping them ameliorate their negative moods [Atalay and Meloy, 2011; Luomala and Laaksonen, 1999; Mick and DeMoss, 1990; Rick et al., 2014]. Adjectives such as "relaxed," "renewed," and "refreshed" were some adjectives that these shoppers used to describe their positive feelings after successful retail therapy. Further, there were very few actual reports of post-shopping guilt and regret even though consumers

may expect to experience these negative emotions with self-gifting and retail therapy [Clarke and Mortimer, 2013]. Nonetheless, some exceptions to the general effectiveness of retail therapy exist. In particular, compulsive shoppers tend to experience greater excitement before shopping, extreme mood swings while shopping, and negative feelings of guilt, regret, and anxiety after returning home with their purchases [Clark and Calleja, 2008; Elliott, 1994; Faber and Christenson, 1996]. Even for regular shoppers, some recent work suggests that whether retail therapy, particularly compensatory consumption in the face of psychological threat, is effective may hinge on *what* consumers buy [Lisjak et al., 2015]; within-domain compensatory purchases are found to be less effective than across-domain purchases as the former could trigger greater ruminative thinking about the threat. It is conceivable that such undesirable rumination could also generate accompanying negative feelings that ironically undermine the very objective of compensatory consumption in the first place.

(c) *Why does retail therapy work:* Emerging work suggests that a potential reason why shopping helps mitigate negative emotions is that choosing whether to buy and what to buy afford consumers with a sense of control or personal agency that feeds into mood enhancement [Rick et al., 2014]. This adds to the potential symbolic meaning that consumers may obtain through buying products with specific features or characteristics and that satisfies particular perceived psychosocial deficiencies (for example, lower self esteem) [Dichter, 1960; Gronmo, 1988; Sivanathan and Pettit, 2010; Woodruffe, 1997; Woodruffe-Burton and Elliott, 2005].

5.3 Summary

In this section, I focus on the affective lives of shoppers, delving into the emotions that might drive them to shop, how they feel while shopping, and how these emotions fluctuate over time during the shopping process. A review of some representative work on emotions and shopping behavior reveal three main themes: (a) negative feelings often induce

consumers to engage in retail therapy, self-gifting, and unplanned buying; (b) such retail therapy attempts are often reported to be successful; and (c) emerging work has revealed that one of the factors that could contribute toward retail-therapy success is the perceived control that choosing what to buy can provide shoppers. Despite the work reviewed in this section, research on emotions and shopping seems to remain at a rather nascent stage, as several related questions call for further examination and investigation. I shall discuss some of these questions in the next and final section.

6

Conclusions and Future Directions in Retail Therapy Research

Shopping is a complex everyday activity that involves the intricate interaction of both the individual and the situation [Darden and Reynolds, 1971; Inman et al., 2009; Tauber, 1972]. In this post-recession era characterized by consumerism and dominated by new media and social connectivity, it is critical to understand the inherent motivations that drive consumers' shopping behavior as well as how shoppers respond to retailers' marketing actions and to the immediate shopping environment. From a theoretical perspective, shopping provides a rich context for researchers to examine how various psychological constructs interact with one another and to extend and enrich existing theories in the social sciences.

One of the most common motivations that consumers may have for shopping is retail therapy — consumers shop with the specific intention to repair their negative emotions. Despite the presumed popularity of retail therapy based on lay intuition and common wisdom, its effectiveness remains unclear. That is, to what extent does retail therapy really work?

This monograph aims to review the extant literature on shopping behavior and emotions in search of an answer to this question. In

particular, I adopt a holistic approach by examining systematically the affective impact of shopping from three interlocking perspectives: *motivational*, *behavioral*, and *emotional*. These perspectives serve to delve into the focal question of retail therapy at increasing levels of concreteness, from the broad goals that consumers may have for shopping, to the more specific activities that they engage in while they shop, and to the even more concrete feelings and emotions that they may experience during the shopping process. By shining a spotlight on each of these perspectives and considering relevant empirical findings corresponding to each perspective, I hope to uncover aspects of the psychology of shopping that may together provide a comprehensive understanding of the antecedents, mechanisms, and consequences of retail therapy.

While the multipronged approach that this review has taken may have provided some clues to answering our main question, much remains to be investigated in the area of retail therapy given that work along each of the three perspectives has arguably been conducted somewhat in isolation. The increasing availability of large data sets from brands and retailers along with advances in multi-platform data collection techniques (for example, scanners, in-store cameras and sensors, mobile, online, shopping carts with radio frequency identification [RFID] equipment, shopper physiological measures, neural measures, eye tracking, social media and text mining) could help overcome many of the methodological challenges that might have hampered a more holistic examination of retail therapy in the past [Chandon et al., 2009; Hui et al., 2009a;b; Knutson et al., 2007; Ko et al., 2015; Netzer et al., 2012; Shankar, 2011; Sorenson, 2009; Wedel and Pieters, 2008].

Although there has been much research that focuses on each of the three perspectives that we have discussed in this review — motivational, behavioral, and emotional — more could arguably be uncovered by considering combinations of these perspectives simultaneously. In this section, I shall first outline a number of follow-up questions in retail therapy, drawing upon the proposed tripartite framework and the discussion in the preceding sections. At a more macro level, in order to highlight the importance of considering these questions in their broader policy, cultural, and technological contexts, I will then discuss three

broad research directions that would be worthwhile for further investigation. Through examining these questions and research directions, it is my sincere hope that the path toward a better understanding of retail therapy will continue to be further illuminated.

6.1 Questions for further research

6.1.1 Emotional, demographic, and dispositional determinants of retail therapy motives (motivational/behavioral/emotional)

Just as we often cognitively distinguish between different emotional experiences, accumulating research has shown that not all negative emotions are equal; in fact, they may have disparate effects on decisions and behavior [Lerner and Keltner, 2000; Raghunathan and Pham, 1999; Raghunathan et al., 2006]. Moreover, incidental emotional states and integral emotional responses could also have differential impact on one's cognition and behavior [Cohen et al., 2008; Garg et al., 2005; Pham, 2007]. Therefore, rather than treating all negative feelings as belonging to one umbrella category, it would be worthwhile to understand and contrast the impact of specific negative emotions (such as sadness, anger, anxiety, fear, guilt, shame, regret, and loneliness) on shopping goals and spending decisions (taking into account of whether they are integral or incidental), and, more generally, whether and how these emotions motivate mood-repair behaviors [Raghunathan and Corfman, 2004]. As a recent example, shopping as a means to regain one's sense of control has been shown to be effective in ameliorating feelings of sadness but not feelings of anger [Rick et al., 2014]. In another investigation, incidental feelings of envy have been shown to drive greater adoption of unique products in an unrelated context as a means to repair one's self-concept [Chung and Lee, 2014]. Together, such studies can provide a more refined understanding of the emotional drivers and consequences of retail therapy.

More broadly, the extent to which consumers rely upon retail therapy to improve their moods may also depend on a host of individual-difference factors. Drawing upon the emotion-repair literature, potential dispositional moderators that deserve further

examination may include gender [Atalay and Meloy, 2011; Chang et al., 2012; Cheng et al., 2013; Inman et al., 2009; Yurchisin et al., 2008], consumers' regulatory focus [Arnold and Reynolds, 2009] and approach/avoidance motivations [Arnold and Reynolds, 2012], their beliefs about the transience of emotions [Labroo and Mukhopadhyay, 2009; Maier et al., 2012] and whether their moods are frozen or changeable [Tice et al., 2001], and even their Big-5 personality traits (for example, neuroticism and openness to experience; see Mooradian and Olver [1996]). In particular, although prior research has shown that males and females tend to have different affect regulation strategies [Gross and John, 2003; John and Eng, 2014] and common wisdom further suggests that females may be more likely to resort to retail therapy as a means for affect regulation, empirical findings as to whether any gender differences exist in retail therapy has been mixed [Atalay and Meloy, 2011; Chang et al., 2012; Yurchisin et al., 2008], indicating the potential presence of other moderators that warrant further investigation.

6.1.2 Non-conscious versus deliberative retail therapy (motivational/emotional)

While many consumers may shop with an explicit goal to repair their negative feelings, to what extent does deliberately having this goal affect one's shopping experience and buying decisions compared to not shopping with this explicit goal in mind? Would positive expectations and anticipatory feelings that might accompany deliberative retail therapy boost the effectiveness of retail therapy [Caplin and Leahy, 2001; Hsee and Tsai, 2008; Lee et al., 2006; Mandel and Nowlis, 2008]? Or might non-conscious (or passive) attempts at retail therapy work better than deliberative (or active) endeavors, since potential feelings of guilt and buyer remorse (for example, with self-gifting) with deliberative retail therapy attempts might negatively color one's shopping experience? [See Bruyneel et al., 2009 who show that active vs. passive mood regulation results in different risk preferences such as spending on lottery tickets.] Relatedly, would shopping under the influence of negative emotions alter one's shopping behavior and experience in unexpected

ways [c.f. Clarke and Mortimer, 2013], such as greater variety seeking and product exploration [Chuang et al., 2008; Lin and Lin, 2012, see also Kahn and Isen, 1993 Roehm and Roehm, 2005]? Examining the answers to these questions seems theoretically and practically worthwhile.

6.1.3 Therapy without transactions: the value of window-shopping (behavioral/emotional)

While retail therapy is typically associated with making actual product purchases, considering that shopping encompasses a broad array of activities besides the sales transaction, to what extent would window-shopping [that is, browsing without buying; Bloch and Richins, 1983, Moe, 2003] be sufficient to mend the "broken soul" and help achieve retail therapy? Indeed, common wisdom suggests that a large proportion of shopping trips that are driven by hedonic factors may not result in any transactions. Or would the therapeutic benefits of window-shopping be store-dependent, since people generally do not window-shop in grocery stores and supermarkets but rather in fashion boutiques, luxury retail, or department stores?

Prior research has suggested that a host of factors, including knowledge acquisition of trends and preferences [Bloch et al., 1986; He et al., 2013], environmental stimulation in the store [Krishna, 2012; Ng, 2003], and social interactions with fellow shoppers, be it direct or indirect [Bellenger et al., 1978; Eroglu et al., 2005; Tauber, 1972], may be adequate to repair one's negative feelings. While the process of choosing what to buy has been found to play a significant role in retail therapy [Rick et al., 2014], recent findings also suggest that monetary considerations during product choice may induce greater analytical processing and interfere with one's preference stability [Lee et al., 2015]. Moreover, it is conceivable that shoppers, faced with the dazzling display of product options when they shop, may still enjoy utility from choice through mentally simulating what they *would* buy without actually buying anything [He et al., 2013]. Arguably, product acquisition occurs from the moment that consumers decide whether and what to put into their shopping carts regardless of whether they eventually buy the products

or not. Consequently, retailers may have to consider more carefully how they could encourage such window shoppers to loosen their purse strings and make the leap from mere imagining to real transacting. One plausible strategy may be to shift consumers' attention from the financial costs of the sales transaction to its hedonic benefits (Lee et al., 2015). Nonetheless, given its potential theoretical and especially managerial implications, an enhanced understanding of the effects and utility of window-shopping seems vital.

6.1.4 Process, persistence, and habits: a time perspective (motivational/behavioral/emotional)

Taking a more dynamic perspective, in what ways might consumers' shopping goals change during their shopping process, and how do these changes in shopping goals result in different emotional experiences? Importantly, how persistent are the effects of retail therapy — to what extent do these effects change the way that consumers shop in the future? Furthermore, how might habitual retail therapy (for example, invoking the "cue-routine-reward" habit loop; see Duhigg [2012] and Graybiel [2008]) influence the overall effectiveness of retail therapy in the long run? Would consumers become desensitized to retail therapy over time if they were to become overly reliant on this mood-repair strategy? These are just a few of the additional questions that might be worth investigating and which could be derived by juxtaposing the three aforementioned perspectives of retail therapy instead of examining them separately.

6.2 Future research directions

6.2.1 Shopping and well-being: a policy perspective

In an astounding study published a few years ago [Chang et al., 2012], a team of researchers found that elderly people who shopped every day had a 27% reduced risk of death than the least frequent shoppers, based on the results of a 10-year longitudinal study conducted in Taiwan. Men (28% less risk) in particular benefited more from everyday shopping than women (23% less risk). While these results may seem surprising,

the essence of the findings seems in line with some of the empirical work we have discussed that suggests that retail therapy may be an effective antidote to emotional depression.

Nonetheless, under what conditions might shopping be dysfunctional instead, leading to adverse effects such as materialism, compulsive buying, and social exclusion (for example, Pieters [2013] and Bauer et al. [2012])? Given the pervasiveness of shopping as an activity in our every day lives, a more in-depth understanding of the underlying psychological mechanisms for the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of retail therapy, and more generally, the extent to which shopping is associated with general physical and mental health, could have important social policy and public health implications.

6.2.2 Cross-cultural differences in retail therapy

The rise of emerging markets and their role in shaping the global economy is a well-recognized trend. A recent report predicts that the economies in these emerging markets will grow almost three times faster than developed economies and to account for an average of 65% of global economic growth through 2020 [Boumphrey and Bevis, 2013]. These and other global developments have spurred increased interest in understanding the cultural determinants of consumer behavior [Lee, 2014; Shavitt et al., 2008]. While much of the work in cross-cultural research to date has centered on the difference between individualistic and collectivistic cultures, and correspondingly, the impact of independent versus interdependent construal on consumer behavior, there is a substantial void in understanding how other cultural dimensions such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance influence consumption patterns [Hofstede, 1980], as well as the similarities and differences between different sub-cultures within continents such as Asia and Europe. This dearth of work in other important cultural dimensions presents researchers with ample opportunities to explore and gain new insights into why consumers shop, as well as how consumers shop and consume across cultures.

In particular, recent work has revealed cross-cultural differences in consumers' propensity to regulate their moods [Luomala et al., 2004;

Valenzuela et al., 2010] and behave impulsively [Zhang and Shrum, 2009], as well as their definitions of hedonic shopping experience, with consumers from collectivistic (vs. individualistic) cultures being less likely to associate hedonic shopping experiences with self-oriented gratification [Evanschitzky et al., 2014]. A further examination of the underlying cultural mechanisms of these differences can thus contribute toward a greater understanding of how important retail therapy as a shopping motivation truly is across cultures.

6.2.3 Technology, omni-channels, and future shopping worlds

Today, we live in a shopper economy that is characterized by growing consumerism [Crawford, 2012]. With the increasing range of shopper marketing technological innovations available in the marketplace [Shankar et al., 2011; Silberer, 2008], consumers enjoy a multitude of ways by which they can shop and acquire new product information and possessions. Certainly, understanding how consumers make channel decisions and product decisions concurrently is imperative in helping firms design more effective and streamlined omni-channel solutions to market to consumers [Neslin et al., 2014].

With regard to our present focus on retail therapy, how does the presence of these myriad shopping technologies change the way that consumers shop? With the omnipresence of numerous shopping platforms (for example, brick-and-mortar stores, online, mobile, social media) in today's marketplace, might consumers be more likely to rely on shopping as a means to repair their negative feelings? How might the characteristics of different channels and platforms for shopping contribute toward retail therapy effectiveness, especially as the line between shopping malls and integrated multi-purpose entertainment centers continues to blur [Abaza, 2001; Bäckström and Johansson, 2006; Crawford, 2004; Ibrahim and Wee, 2002; Juwaheer et al., 2013; Meyer-Ohle, 2009]? Would emerging technologies such as 3D printing [Baldwin, 2015; Bird, 2012; Herrmann, 2015; Marriott, 2015] eventually render social brick-and-mortar shopping an activity of the past altogether as consumers satisfy their product needs and wants in the privacy of their own homes? To address these challenging but

broadly important questions, rather than simply staring expectantly into one's crystal ball, it seems imperative to carefully consider the socio-psychological implications of such technological advancements for marketers and consumers.

6.3 Final remarks

September 11, 2001, 8.46 a.m. When American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the northern facade of the World Trade Center's North Tower, followed by the calamitous crash of a second flight moments later, the world changed forever. As people around the world struggled to make sense of the shocking and horrific events on that fateful morning, then New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani in a press conference the next day urged Americans, if they were home from work, to "go about their normal day, and take the day as an opportunity to go shopping." Certainly, this appeal is aimed at encouraging people to return to their normal lives and to contain their emotions from the cataclysmic events of the previous day. Seen from a different light, the appeal not only speaks to the normalcy of shopping as a daily activity in life, but also hints at the potential ameliorative powers of shopping in calming the shaken soul in the wake of a national tragedy.

With a tripartite framework that I propose for approaching the subject of retail therapy at its center stage, in this monograph, I attempt to address the question of whether retail therapy works by reviewing the extant literature on shopping behavior and consumer psychology. The research questions discussed in this section, in particular, offer a modest selection of the plausibly unlimited set of questions that researchers could address in seeking to further understand the rich domain of shopping and its role in affect regulation; that these questions seem theoretically rich and practically relevant at the same time suggests that there is potential value in systematically adopting the proposed tripartite model as a guiding framework for the holistic study of retail therapy. The three broad research directions that follow further underscore the importance of examining the subject of retail therapy while considering its broader policy, cultural, and technological backdrop, so

as to enhance the continued relevance and ecological validity of the research investigation. Considering the burgeoning interest in shopper marketing and multi-channel retailing, and the emergence of new technologies that facilitate the study of shopping behavior (such as eye tracking devices, shopping path tracking using RFID, as well as social media and text mining), the time seems ripe to dive deeper into these research questions and directions, as we seek to better appreciate Rudy Giuliani's post-9/11 call to the Americans to shop, and to embark on our continued quest toward a better understanding of the effectiveness of retail therapy.

Acknowledgements

The author thanks the Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) at Columbia University for research support; Jaeyeon Chung, Isabel Ding, and Youjung Jun for research assistance; and Ximena Garcia Rada, Bernd Schmitt, Franklin Shaddy, and an anonymous reviewer for helpful comments.

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