Investigating Chinese consumer perceived shopping value in department stores and supermarkets
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Department stores and supermarkets in China experienced significant growth in the past decade. Before the economic reform, department stores were major retail outlets in China. They served as the sole distribution channel for manufactured consumer goods (Wong & Dean, 2009). Supermarkets, on the other hand, were introduced in China during the 1990s. They become popular in China because of consumers’ demand for high quality and large varieties of merchandise from groceries, home goods, and apparel and accessories. Today, department stores and supermarkets are major retail outlets that Chinese consumers rely on to satisfy their needs and wants (Wong & Dean, 2009). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate Chinese consumers’ shopping experiences in these two major outlets by exploring consumer perceived shopping value.

Consumer perceived value (CPV) has been identified as one of the most important measures for gaining a competitive edge (Parasuraman, 1997) and has been viewed as the basis for all marketing activities (Holbrook, 1994). It is considered the key outcome of consumption experiences (Holbrook, 1986) and has been argued to be the most important indicator of repurchase intentions (Parasurman & Grewal, 2000). So, retailers must deliver value that creates good shopping experiences that will increase the shopping intention of consumers. With an increasing in purchasing power and abundant choices of retail outlets and products, Chinese consumers become demanding. Gaining shopping experience and value become important for them (Davis, 2009). Chinese consumers also seek different shopping experiences in different retail outlet (Wong & Dean, 2009). So investigating consumer perceived shopping value may become essential in understanding Chinese consumers’ shopping and patronage behavior.

The purpose of this study is to explore how Chinese consumers perceive the value when they shop in two key retail outlets: department stores and supermarkets. Eight key value dimensions were first identified through an in-depth literature review and a preliminary qualitative. Those value dimensions include acquisition, transaction, choice, efficiency, visual appeal, exploration, socialization, and self-gratification. Based on literature review, eight hypotheses were proposed:

- Acquisition, transaction, and efficiency value are perceived to be higher when shop at supermarkets (H1, H2, and H3).
- Choice, visual appeal, exploration, and socialization value are perceived to be higher when shop at department stores (H4, H5, H6, and H7).
- There is no difference between consumers’ perception of self-gratification value from shopping at those two retail outlets (H8).

A survey instrument was developed to measure different value dimensions. 253 Chinese consumers from a convenient sample participated in the study. A full factorial multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were used to test hypotheses. All hypotheses were rejected or accepted based on a significant level of 0.05. The MANOVA test suggested that overall value that Chinese consumers perceive that they gain from shopping at department stores was different from shopping at supermarkets. Specifically,
participants perceived higher levels of acquisition value, transaction value, and efficiency value from shopping at supermarkets (H1, H2, and H3 are supported). Meanwhile, they perceived higher levels of choice, visual appeal, and exploration value when they shop at department stores (H4, H5, and H6 are supported). Furthermore, there is no difference of socialization (H7 is not supported) or self-gratification value (H8 is supported) between department stores and supermarkets.

The results suggest that the shopping value that Chinese consumers gain from supermarkets is more utilitarian oriented. Because supermarkets feature frequent price promotions and deals, Chinese consumers perceive that they get more money’s worth (acquisition value) and are very happy with getting deals (transaction value) from shopping at supermarkets. Meanwhile, supermarkets carry large assortments that similar as mass merchandisers in western countries. Large assortments provide one-stop shopping convenience, that is, consumers can have all the shopping done efficiently (efficiency value) at supermarkets. On the other hands, the shopping value that Chinese consumers gain from department stores is more hedonic oriented. Department stores emphasize more on fashion apparel and accessories. It is enjoyable to for Chinese consumer to shop at department stores for pleasant visual displays (visual appeal value) and learning latest fashion trends (exploration value). However, Chinese consumers shop at both retail outlets for socializing with family and friends (socialization value) and treat themselves or lift up moods (self-gratification value).

The findings of the study contribute to our understanding of Chinese consumers ‘shopping behavior. Because the Chinese retail industry become more competitive, it is more important than ever for retailers to identify and deliver key shopping value dimensions to create a competitive advantage. Future studies may focus on identifying key value dimensions and using value concept to further understand Chinese consumers’ patronage behavior.

Reference


