

A Study on the Determinants of Satisfaction with Hedonic Products

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to analyze the interplaying role of cognitive and affective determinants of satisfaction. The proposed conceptual model suggests that perceived performance influences pleasure and arousal, arousal adds activation intensity to pleasure and performance and pleasure impact on satisfaction. The model is supported by the experience of 127 people who saw the 2002 science fiction movie *Minority Report*. Our results confirm prior findings on the role of affect in satisfaction and highlight the role of arousal as an amplifier of the effect of pleasure on satisfaction with hedonic products.

Key words: Satisfaction, hedonic products, pleasure, arousal, performance

INTRODUCTION

Over the last thirty years there has been a significant amount of research into what makes a customer satisfied (Oliver, 1980; Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Muller *et al.*, 1991; Westbrook and Oliver, 1991; Mano and Oliver, 1993; Evrard and Aurier, 1994; Wirtz and Bateson, 1999; Bigné *et al.*, 2005; Caro and Garcia, 2007). Initial research led to the predominance of the disconfirmation paradigm, which assumes that satisfaction results from a comparison between performance and expectations (Oliver, 1980; Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Oliver and DeSarbo, 1988). Later, several scholars reported that the cognitive component alone was insufficient in modeling satisfaction and suggested the emotional component was a major determinant of satisfaction (Muller *et al.*, 1991; Westbrook and Oliver, 1991; Mano and Oliver, 1993; Evrard and Aurier, 1994; Wirtz and Bateson, 1999; Bigné *et al.*, 2005; Caro and Garcia, 2007). These more recent studies found a strong interrelationship between product-elicited emotions and product satisfaction. They concluded that adding consumption emotions to the satisfaction model improved the predictive power of the cognitive component. They also confirmed the view that cognitive and affective processes are involved in determining satisfaction judgments (White and Yu, 2005; Caro and Garcia, 2007).

Most of the products and services studied in the satisfaction literature have been functional or cognitive in nature. For example, Westbrook (1980) studied cars, also cable television service and cars (Westbrook, 1987), Oliver and DeSarbo (1988) studied stock market transaction outcomes, Westbrook and Oliver (1991) again studied cars, Oliver (1993) studied courses and cars and

Wirtz and Bateson (1999) studied bank services. Until recently, hedonic experiences have received limited attention. In an effort to bridge this gap, this study examines the determinants of satisfaction with hedonic products. These products are purchased and consumed for the sake of pleasure, fun and enjoyment (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Wirtz and Lee, 2003). The aim of this research is to thoroughly examine the interplaying role of cognition and emotion in explaining satisfaction with a hedonic product. It evaluates the impact of performance, pleasure and arousal on consumer satisfaction with movies.

The study begins by setting out the theoretical background and the hypothesized relationships. Then, the methodology is presented and the results are described. The study concludes with a discussion of the findings.

Conceptual framework and research hypotheses:

Consumer satisfaction has been conceptualized as either cognitive or emotional. Howard and Sheth (1969) refer to satisfaction as “a buyer’s cognitive state”, while Westbrook and Reilly (1983) describe it as “an emotional response”. More recently, Oliver (1997) defined satisfaction as “a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment, including levels of under- or overfulfillment.” This definition emphasizes the cognitive and affective components of satisfaction determinants. The cognitive component refers to the consumer’s rational evaluation of the performance of the product (and its features), while the affective component represents the consumer’s emotional reactions.

Fournier and Mick (1999) underlined the fact that few researchers have gone beyond the expectancy disconfirmation model to consider the affective nature of satisfaction. Until recently, the emotional component has been under represented in the literature (White and Yu, 2005). This can be explained by the utilitarian or functional nature of the products studied. This investigation focuses on satisfaction with hedonic products. Hedonic products are purchased for their hedonic consumption experiences (Stokmans, 1998). These experiences tend to evoke heightened levels of fantasy, feeling and fun (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Addis and Holbrook, 2001). In leisure consumption (moviegoing, concerts and sports events attendance) one chooses the activity primarily to enjoy it and to have fun. Thus, it is logical to predict that when the product being consumed is hedonic, emotional responses to consumption experiences constitute an important determinant of satisfaction.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model, including the hypothesized relationships between the constructs retained in this investigation. Consumption emotions, described by the dimensions of pleasure and arousal, are a function of performance. Pleasure and product performance are direct predictors of satisfaction. In addition, arousal is expected to influence pleasure. The foundations for the proposed relationships in the conceptual model will be discussed next.

The impact of performance on satisfaction: Despite the fact that satisfaction has traditionally been conceptualized as an affective phenomenon, the process leading up to it, has been predominately explained by the expectancy disconfirmation model. This model suggests that consumers form expectations about how a product will perform before they use it, compare their expectations to the actual performance, then make a judgment about how satisfied they are (Oliver (1980) and Westbrook (1987). Numerous studies have shown that when consumers perceive a product performs better than expected, they are more satisfied with it and vice versa (Oliver, 1980; Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Westbrook, 1987; Oliver and DeSarbo, 1988; Bigné *et al.*, 2005). According to the expectancy disconfirmation model, the satisfaction judgment is a positive function of expectations (Olson and Dover, 1979), performance (Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Tse and Wilton, 1988) and disconfirmation (Oliver, 1980; Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Westbrook, 1987; Oliver and DeSarbo, 1988; Bigné *et al.*, 2005).

Several studies have proposed and empirically verified the direct impact of performance on satisfaction. They demonstrated that when the performance of the product is favorable, consumers will be satisfied and

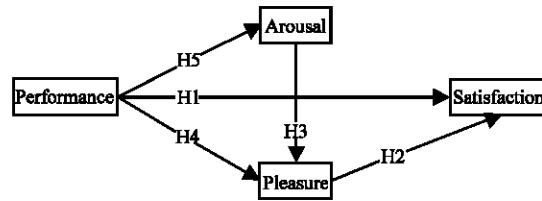


Fig. 1: Hypothesized relationships

when the performance of the product is unfavorable, consumers will be dissatisfied. Churchill and Surprenant (1982) reported that performance had a significant effect on satisfaction with some products but not others. Tse and Wilton (1988) found that performance had both a direct and an indirect effect, through disconfirmation, on satisfaction. Goode (2002) reported that experience with product quality was the most important variable explaining overall satisfaction. Spreng and Chiou (2002) concluded that performance had a stronger effect on satisfaction than did disconfirmation. In the marketing service literature, studies proved that the performance model outperforms the disconfirmation model (Hui *et al.*, 2007). In keeping with the literature, it is proposed that performance will have a direct positive relationship with satisfaction.

H1: Performance positively influences satisfaction.

The impact of pleasure on satisfaction: According to Westbrook and Oliver (1991), consumption emotions “refers to the set of emotional responses elicited specifically during product usage or consumption experiences.” Consumption emotions have been described using distinct categories of experiences and expressions such as joy, anger and fear (Izard, 1977). They have also been portrayed using a limited number emotional dimensions: Pleasure-unpleasantness, relaxation-action and calmness-excitement (Plutchik, 1980), or pleasure-displeasure, arousal-nonarousal and dominance-submissiveness (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Emotions have proven to be central to consumer behavior (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999). They have been found to act as markers, moderators and mediators of consumer behavior (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999).

Several studies on satisfaction have shown that consumption emotions influence satisfaction (Westbrook, 1987; Dubé-Rioux, 1990; Muller *et al.*, 1991; Oliver, 1993; Mano and Oliver, 1993; Evrard and Aurier, 1994; Wirtz and Bateson, 1999; Phillips and Baumgartner, 2002; Bigné *et al.*, 2005; Caro and Garcia, 2007). For instance, Dubé-Rioux (1990) found that consumers’ positive and negative emotional responses were highly predictive of

their level of satisfaction with restaurants. Oliver (1993) found satisfaction with automobiles to be determined by attribute satisfaction, attribute dissatisfaction, disconfirmation, positive affect and negative affect. Westbrook and Oliver (1991) identified 5 groups of respondents according to the emotional content of their reports: Happy/content, pleasant (positive) surprise, unemotional, unpleasant (negative) surprise and angry/upset. The happy and the pleasant surprise groups were the most satisfied. In descending order of level of satisfaction were the unemotional, unpleasant surprise and angry/upset groups. Mano and Oliver (1993) found that both utilitarian and hedonic components of product evaluation evoke positive and negative emotions which, in turn, have an impact on satisfaction. Evrard and Aurier (1994) analyzed dimensions of affect and their relation to satisfaction with a movie. They identified two independent dimensions of positive and negative emotions and found the emotional content of experience to have a strong influence on the level of satisfaction. Wirtz and Bateson (1999) found that disconfirmation has a direct and positive effect on pleasure and both, in turn, have direct and positive effects on satisfaction in relation to simulated bank services. Bigné *et al.* (2005) tested two competing models of influence of emotions on the satisfaction of theme park visitors. The first was derived from environmental psychology research whereas, the second, was based on the cognitive theory of emotions. The empirical study supported the suggestion that the cognitive theory of emotions better explains the effect of pleasure on satisfaction. Specifically, it found that disconfirmation evokes arousal and pleasure which, in turn, influence satisfaction. More recently, Caro and Garcia (2007) compared two ways to introduce emotional responses into the cognitive satisfaction model: As mediator or as independent factor. Their empirical study among participants at a sporting event showed that pleasure, arousal and disconfirmation are all independent determinants of satisfaction.

In the area of consumption emotions, previous studies on satisfaction used two approaches to describe product-elicited or service-elicited emotions. The first, categorized emotions as positive and negative, (Westbrook, 1987; Dubé-Rioux, 1990; Liljander and Strandvik, 1997; Phillips and Baumgartner, 2002), whereas the second, distinguished between two dimensions of emotions: Pleasure-displeasure and arousal-nonarousal (Wirtz and Bateson, 1999; Bigné *et al.*, 2005; Caro and Garcia, 2007). According to Mano and Oliver (1993) the first representation was very limited in terms of describing product-elicited emotions. Mano and Oliver (1993) underscored this limit:

“It apparently is not sufficient to describe consumption experiences as either pleasant or unpleasant; rather, these experiences could also be described as elating, calming, or frustrating, thus distinguishing between different combinations of pleasantness and arousal. Adopting a two-dimensional view of postconsumption emotional experience suggests that, despite their conceptual proximity, pleasantness (i.e., pleasant affect with moderate arousal) is of different composition than low-arousal positive affect (i.e., relaxation and calmness)...”

In this study, consumption emotions are described using Russell's model of affect. This model has been shown to be useful in capturing emotional responses to consumption experiences (Huang, 2001). Russell (1980) suggested that consumers' emotional responses to environments can be classified as pleasure and arousal. Pleasure includes feeling happy, pleased, contented, satisfied, relaxed and hopeful in the situation (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Arousal refers to how stimulated a person feels and is categorized as excited, frenzied, jittery, stimulated, wide-awake and aroused (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Therefore, in accordance with previous studies on the link between emotions and satisfaction, this study proposes that pleasure influences satisfaction responses.

H2: Pleasure positively influences satisfaction.

The impact of arousal on pleasure: Previous studies on satisfaction have proven that arousal has an impact on pleasure (Mano and Oliver, 1993; Oliver *et al.*, 1997; Wirtz and Bateson, 1999; Mattila and Wirtz, 2001; Bigné *et al.*, 2005). Mano and Oliver (1993) identified arousal as an important modifier of states of positive and negative hedonic tone in consumption. They also identified it as having a significant impact on positive and negative consumption emotions. Oliver *et al.* (1997) reported that disconfirmation and arousal are the principal determinants of positive affect. Wirtz and Bateson (1999) failed to find any interaction between pleasure and arousal. This may be due to the fact that bank services might not have been appropriate for creating arousal, stimulation and excitement. Mattila and Wirtz (2000) found that there is a significant interaction between pleasure and arousal on satisfaction in a pleasant environment. As a result of their investigation into the theme park experience, Bigné *et al.* (2005) discovered that disconfirmation evokes arousal which, in turn, influences feelings of pleasure. In keeping with previous research, this study proposes that performance causes arousal, which, in turn, adds

activation intensity to pleasure. The expectation is that arousal has a positive influence on pleasure.

H3: Arousal positively influences pleasure.

The impact of performance on pleasure and arousal:

There has been much debate about whether affective judgment is dependent or independent of prior cognition. On the one hand, there is the independence hypothesis which proposes that cognition and emotions are independent of each other: they can occur independently from one another or in parallel, one informing the other (Zajonc, 1980). On the other hand, there is the dependence hypothesis, which suggests a series of cognitive processes before affective decisions are finally made (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). This is well known as the appraisal theory of emotions. It suggests that the eventual evaluation of an event or a situation is a critical determinant of any emotion (i.e., cognitive appraisal of a situation is necessary for the formation of emotions). Lazarus (1991) concluded that an individual's assessment of a stimulus or event depends on both, internal (e.g., goals, beliefs) and external (e.g., product performance) factors.

In the satisfaction literature, it has been suggested that emotions are a mediator between cognitive evaluation and satisfaction. It has also been indicated that together, emotions and cognition (e.g., disconfirmation and performance) explain more about satisfaction responses than either does on its own. The dependence hypothesis is well accepted in the literature on satisfaction (Muller *et al.*, 1991; Westbrook and Oliver, 1991; Mano and Oliver, 1993; Wirtz and Bateson, 1999; Bigné *et al.*, 2005).

In accordance with the literature, it is proposed that perceived performance influences pleasure and arousal. Higher perceived performance should lead to higher arousal and a more pleasant consumption experience, whereas lower perceived performance should lead to lower arousal and a more unpleasant experience.

H4: Performance positively influences pleasure.

H5: Performance positively influences arousal.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The conceptual model and the hypothesized relationships were empirically tested using a hedonic experience. In fact, moviegoing is a hedonic consumption experience, which tends to evoke heightened levels of fantasies, feelings and fun (Hirschman and Holbrook,

1982; Addis and Holbrook, 2001). The movie, *Minority Report*, directed by Steven Spielberg, was selected because its genre (i.e., science fiction) was expected to evoke a high level of arousal. The questionnaire was administered in June 2002 during the week immediately following the premiere of the film. One hundred and twenty seven moviegoers filled in the survey. The sample consisted of 55.1% women and 44.9% men. The average age was 28.1 years.

Multiple item scales were used to measure the constructs in the model. Satisfaction was measured using 5 items, 3 of which were adapted from Oliver (1980). These items were: "How satisfied are you with the movie", ranging from "not satisfied" to "very satisfied"; "I am very satisfied with my decision to see this movie", ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree"; "I feel bad that I decided to see this movie instead of another", ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree"; "I think I did the right thing when I decided to come see this movie", ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree"; and "The movie that I have seen was __", ranging from "much worse than I expected" to "much better than I expected". Pleasure was measured using a five-item seven-point semantic differential scale (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). The bipolar adjectives were: Pleased/annoyed, contented/melancholic, hopeful/despairing, relaxed/bored and happy/unhappy. Arousal was measured with a five-item seven-point semantic differential scale (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). The items were: excited/calm; stimulated/relaxed; frenzied/sluggish, jittery/dull and wide awake/sleepy. For perceived performance, nine movie attributes were selected from a prior qualitative study. They included attributes such as acting, direction, scene edition, script, story and plot. Respondents were asked to indicate their evaluation of each attribute on a 7 unipolar scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structural equations modeling using EQS 6.1 is performed to test the hypothesized relationships between constructs. The Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation procedure is applied. The robust method is selected as the most appropriate due to the lack of normality in the population (Byrne, 1994). The Mardia coefficient value is 19.4408.

The overall evaluation of the model fit is based on several fit indicators (Byrne, 1994). These indicators are the Satorra-Bentler statistic $S-B\chi^2$, the Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA). These fit indices are commonly used in marketing studies

(Chebat and Michon, 2003; Bigné *et al.*, 2005). In EQS 6.1, when the robust option is chosen, S-B χ^2 and all these corrected fit indices are computed.

The model results in an S-B χ^2 of 316.4099 (degrees of freedom = 239, $p < 0.001$). The S-B χ^2/df is of 1.324. The other fit indices are all within an acceptable range. The NNFI is at 0.90 and the CFI is at 0.91. The RMSEA is at 0.051 (90% confidence interval of RMSEA: [0.034, 0.065]). These results suggest a reasonable fit of the model to the data (Table 1).

Before proceeding with the analysis of the structural model estimates, it is necessary to evaluate the psychometric properties of the scales. The reliability coefficients (ρ_c) are 0.946 for satisfaction, 0.898 for performance, 0.896 for pleasure and 0.882 for arousal. In addition, factor loadings are all above 0.50 and statistically significant at 0.05 level (Table 2 reports the

Table 1: Summary statistics of model fit

Indicators	Values
Satorra-Bentler statistic (S-B χ^2)	316.4099 (df=239 ^a $p < 0.001$)
S-B χ^2/df	1.324
Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) ^b	0.90
Comparative Fit Index (CFI) ^b	0.91
Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) ^c	0.051
90% confidence interval of RMSEA	[0.034, 0.065]

^aFour error covariances were respecified as freely estimated parameters as suggested by the results of the Lagrange Multiplier (LM) test. ^bNNFI and CFI close to 1 indicate a good fit. Values of 0.90 and above suggest adequate fit. ^cValues below 0.10 suggest adequate fit

Table 2: Construct measurement summary

Constructs and items	Standardized loadings	Robust-t values
Construct 1. Satisfaction		
Satisfaction 1	0.979	3.369
Satisfaction 2	0.979	3.691
Satisfaction 3	0.823	3.498
Satisfaction 4	0.889	3.538
Satisfaction 5	0.716	3.380
Construct 2. Performance		
Performance 1	0.641	6.038
Performance 2	0.828	7.727
Performance 3	0.781	7.772
Performance 4	0.872	14.133
Performance 5	0.505	4.181
Performance 6	0.797	8.867
Performance 7	0.540	6.914
Performance 8	0.588	5.792
Performance 9	0.721	18.456
Construct 3. Pleasure		
Pleasure 1	0.799	13.374
Pleasure 2	0.763	10.985
Pleasure 3	0.745	9.251
Pleasure 4	0.848	13.387
Pleasure 5	0.822	14.144
Construct 4. Arousal		
Arousal 1	0.824	14.961
Arousal 2	0.765	10.967
Arousal 3	0.811	10.412
Arousal 4	0.719	9.254
Arousal 5	0.750	10.717

standardized loadings and the robust-t values). Finally, average variances extracted for satisfaction, performance, pleasure and arousal are all above 0.50. These results show evidence of convergent validity for measurement scales employed.

The structural model estimates are used to examine the hypothesized relationships. The 5 paths are all statistically significant at 0.05 level ($t\text{-value} > |1.96|$). Performance has a positive significant effect on satisfaction ($\beta = 0.218$, $t = 2.146$), supporting hypothesis 1. Pleasure has a positive significant effect on satisfaction ($\beta = 0.730$, $t = 3.424$), supporting hypothesis 2. As expected in hypothesis 3, arousal impacts on pleasure ($\beta = 0.385$, $t = 3.529$). Finally, performance has a significant positive effect on pleasure ($\beta = 0.536$, $t = 5.290$) and arousal ($\beta = 0.649$, $t = 10.524$) supporting hypotheses 4 and 5, respectively. These results are presented in Fig. 2.

Bagozzi *et al.* (1999) suggested that consumption emotions present a new frontier for research into consumer behavior, that in fact, our understanding of emotional responses in marketing is very limited. This study examines the role of emotions in the consumer satisfaction domain. The proposed model suggests that emotional responses act as a mediator between cognition and satisfaction. According to this model, perceived performance has direct and indirect impacts, through emotional responses, on satisfaction, which supports the cognition-emotion theory. These results confirm prior findings (Oliver, 1993; Mano and Oliver, 1993; Oliver and Westbrook, 1993; Oliver *et al.*, 1997; Wirtz and Bateson, 1999; Bigné *et al.*, 2005; Caro and Garcia, 2007) and support the two appraisal model proposed by Oliver (1989), which stipulates that satisfaction is partly cognitive and partly affective.

This study proves that emotional responses are a fundamental component of hedonic consumption experiences. The impact of pleasure on satisfaction is found to be greater than the direct impact of perceived performance on satisfaction, in line with the findings of Bigné *et al.* (2005) and Caro and Garcia (2007). Bigné *et al.* (2005) concluded that emotions had a greater impact on satisfaction than disconfirmation. The same result was

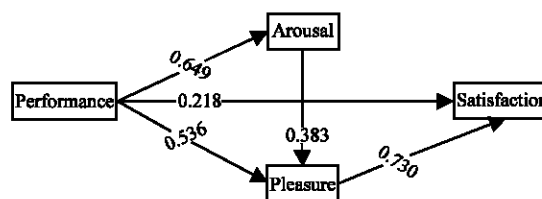


Fig. 2: Model estimates (standardized parameters)

reported in the study of Caro and Garcia (2007) who found that arousal had more influence on satisfaction than disconfirmation.

This study shows a positive impact of arousal on pleasure. The interaction between arousal and pleasure seem to hold true in the case of stimulating environments. This investigation further suggests that in the case of science fiction movie consumption, performance evokes arousal, which in turn, generates pleasure and indirectly satisfaction. Future research should replicate the model proposed in this study for different hedonic products or in different hedonic service settings such as live concerts and theatre performances. It would be worthwhile to re-examine the influence of arousal on pleasure in the cases of more and less stimulating consumption experiences.

Hedonic products have largely been ignored in traditional consumer research (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). In the satisfaction literature, little attention has been given to the study of hedonic products (e.g., movie, concert) as opposed to products or services that are more functionally oriented (e.g., bank services). This study demonstrates that for hedonic products: Emotion is a key determinant of satisfaction; cognition has direct and indirect influences, through emotions, on satisfaction; and arousal adds activation intensity to the pleasantness experienced by consumers. In addition, this study demonstrates that Russell's representation of affect appears to perform well in the case of stimulating hedonic consumption experiences.

Finally, it is worthwhile to note that the results of this investigation have implications for many areas of interest. They contribute to studies on the role of affect in: Consumer behavior, hedonic consumption, movie experience and satisfaction.

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