An Exploration of the Shopping Experience

by
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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

Recreational shopping has long been of interest to business academics and practitioners, but research on it has been underdeveloped in the leisure field. Although the leisure literature and business literature represent distinct perspectives, there appears to be many significant parallels between recreational shopping and leisure. The purpose of this study was to examine the intrinsic meanings of shopping; to explore the experiential aspects of the recreational shopping experience (including the influences of the retail environment on individuals who regularly engage in recreational shopping). This study took place in Toronto, Ontario. The sample included five female self-proclaimed recreational shoppers. The researcher accompanied each participant on a shopping excursion which took place at a shopping mall selected by the participant. Data were collected through three qualitative methods. First, participant observation involved the researcher walking alongside the participant as she shopped. Following the shopping session, the researcher conducted an in-depth face-to-face interview with each participant; the interview was guided by a set of open-ended questions. In addition, this study utilized photo-elicitation in which the participants were asked to photograph 'anything' that made an impression during their visit to the mall. The photographs offered tangible illustrations of shopping experiences and were used as a catalyst for discussion during the interviews. The data was analyzed using Grounded Theory coding which lead to the identification of two main themes and six respective subthemes. The emergent themes are all connected to the key idea that shoppers are motivated by their expectations and desires when they partake in the recreational shopping activity. Shopping offers numerous opportunities that provide immediate hedonic pleasure as well as intrinsic rewards. Such opportunities often include, the 'before and after' phases of experiences of acquisition and unexpected discoveries, the positive interactions which occur both inside and outside a retail environment, and lastly, the individual's use of shopping as a means of self-expression and a tool to manage their self image. Satisfaction, spontaneity, familiarity, mastery, accomplishment, and feelings of escape were all present in these shopping experiences. The findings also described the role of shopping malls as a leisure space and as facilitators of recreational shopping activities. Furthermore, this study demonstrated that shopping can offer a profound leisure experience for many people and the activity should not only be researched in terms of just 'recreational shopping' or 'utilitarian shopping.' Rather, the findings indicate several overlaps between the two types of shopping and further research is needed to more fully understand the complexities of the activity.

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Chapter One

Introduction

While shopping is often approached as a tedious chore that requires mandatory time and attention, there is a growing body of literature that recognizes shopping's experiential aspects, intrinsic rewards and hedonic values (Guiry & Lutz, 2000). Indeed, for many consumers shopping is a means for satisfying both personal and social priorities (Bloch, Ridgway, & Dawson, 1994; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Tauber, 1972). Shopping has been characterized by symbolic product meanings, hedonic responses, variety and novelty-seeking, aesthetics, creativity and play (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Williams, Slama, & Rogers, 1985). In its contemporary sense, shopping has become an activity of leisure and recreation that is as relevant and popular as going to a movie or simply strolling in the park (Bäckström, 2006; Moss, 2007).

Despite the positive outcomes which can emerge from shopping experiences, shopping is often criticized as being the "root of all misery" (Hine, 2002, p. xi). The activity has been implicitly linked to consumerism, a concept which "describes a society in which many people formulate their goals in life partly through acquiring goods that they clearly do not need for subsistence," (Stearns, 2001, p. ix). Similarly, Scitovsky (1992) argues that we are falling victim to the relentless appeal of consumerism as we consume without enjoyment, spend without reason; and work and spend to maintain a lifestyle that is personally meaningless. He is not alone. Schor (1998) found that possession of material goods was negatively correlated with higher levels of happiness or satisfaction. She reports that consumers feel trapped by

> a system in which we are measured by what we have, and can (and do) buy, in which there is insistent pressure to keep up with rising consumer norms, and in which having and spending more is the analog to the accelerating pace of life (and a component of accelerating leisure). (Schor, 1998, p. 9)

Hine (2002) agrees by describing shopping as "an orgy of irresponsibility in which individuals run amok the aisles spending money they do not have…shopping is, at its purest and most exquisite, an undisciplined rampage of selfish consumption" (p. 37). As such, it can be viewed as compulsive and self destructive behavior linked to societal ills ranging from alcoholism, drug addiction, pathological gambling, and kleptomania (Faber, 2000). The leisure literature generally categorizes such behaviours as 'deviant leisure' (Sullivan & LeDrew, 2007) and since shopping is rarely considered a conventional form of leisure (Guiry & Lutz, 200); negative reviews of shopping follow.

Rojek (2006) worries that consumptive forces may compromise otherwise legitimate and worthwhile leisure experiences. The author states that "in a free society, if the majority elect to spend a good deal of leisure time in acquiring goods, services, and entertainment, what is wrong with that? Actually, there is a good deal wrong with it" (p. 476). According to Rojek, leisure has fallen under the control of the state, the market, and the mass media. It then follows that the shopping experience becomes void of the characteristics traditionally found in leisure such as freedom, choice, and self-determination. In a similar argument, Hemingway (1996) argues that "leisure has been deformed" through increasing commodification and consumerization (p. 28). The author contends that leisure's potential to emancipate has now been manipulated by the market as a form of social control. Given that shopping is often required to conform to society, any arguments which campaign for shopping's potential as leisure may appear problematic. Yet despite the psychological quandaries and moral dilemmas associated with shopping, it is remarkably pervasive with millions of people taking part daily (Hine, 2002). Hine argues that "there are millions of people on earth who live in circumstances where they cannot shop, but most of them would do so if they could" (p. xi).

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The Leisure Potential of the Recreational Shopping Experience

Leisure is often considered as activity chosen in relative freedom for its qualities of satisfaction and desired outcomes (Kelly, 1996). Kelly suggests that leisure is also a quality of experience chosen more for its own sake than for ends related to survival or necessity. The author observes that people seek leisure experiences which provide opportunities for presentation of the self and self-development. Kelly further elaborates that leisure is pursued for intrinsic satisfactions as well as the the meanings it holds for the present and the future.

Presentation of the self in leisure and recreational shopping

Guiry et al. (2006) also elaborate that recreational shopping invokes gratification beyond simple enjoyment. For example, leisure identity is developed when individuals define themselves in terms of a leisure pursuit (Shamir, 1992). It is suggested that recreational shopping may aid in the search for identity because its various processes (e.g. bargain shopping) and outcomes (e.g. acquiring deals, finding expressive clothing, etc.) offer a means of acknowledging, entertaining, or expressing one's self (Guiry et al., 2006). The authors suggest that this process can be enhanced or heightened by the often intense involvement of recreational shoppers with specific products or shopping activities. Guiry and his colleagues further propose the existence of a *recreational shopper identity*, which is a "dimension of an individual's self-concept whereby the consumer defines himself or herself in terms of shopping for recreational or leisure purposes" (p. 75). The authors observe that some individuals strongly identify with recreational shopping and are committed to it as a personally rewarding activity.

Dimanche and Samdahl (1994) note that in both the leisure and business literature, leisure activities are perceived as important avenues for people to represent their personality. The

authors explain that leisure allows for the presentation or the exploration of different facets of a person's identity. For instance, Lehoten and Mäenpää (1997) wrote that

> Shopping means fantasizing about oneself and someone else. It is imagining oneself being in a new way, as one pushes the limits of the image of the self in a desired direction. The mall is a theatre of longing, inventing and testing roles…This implies not that the shoppers are like chameleons changing their identities voluntarily, but rather, that they are like children playing roles. Fundamental to the shopping experience is the pleasure and excitement arising from the potential opening and removal of the self's boundaries. (p. 159-160)

In essence, people may seek ego-enhancement to their self-concepts through the addition of satisfying roles and "acting out" their hedonistic fantasies (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Lehoten & Mäenpää, 1997).

Intrinsic satisfactions of leisure and recreational shopping

For many consumers, shopping can be a valued leisure activity which offers considerable satisfaction, most of which have little to do with self-indulgence (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994; Bloch, Ridgway, & Sherrell, 1989; Cox, Cox, & Anderson, 2005; Hine, 2002). Recreational shoppers may experience intrinsic satisfaction, perceived freedom, entertainment, and escape in conjunction with, or independent of, the acquisition of goods and services (Bäckström, 2006; Guiry et al., 2006). Pleasure and enjoyment can be major components of the recreational shopping experience. This is consistent with Stebbins' (1997) notion of casual leisure which represents a "relatively short-lived, pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy it" (Stebbins, 1997). Arguably, shopping can offer intrinsic as well as utilitarian rewards (Bäckström, 2006).

Recreational shoppers may also receive intrinsic rewards through bargain perceptions and the occurrence of 'finding a deal'. Such experiences are often characterized by increased sensory involvement, pride, excitement and a sense of accomplishment (Babin, Darden, &

Griffin, 1994). For some shoppers, the actual product may become insignificant in comparison to the excitement of finding a bargain (Babin et al). In such cases, people are attracted to shopping because "buying the items in question provides a sense of accomplishment. The bargain is not just about saving money. It's about feeling that you've accomplished something extraordinary and beat the odds on prices. It's almost like gambling" (Pooler, 2003, p. 60). It appears that recreational shopping offers similar opportunities for feelings of mastery and competence, which are both consistent with that of leisure experiences.

Meaningful leisure and recreational shopping experiences

Leisure experiences also have the potential to engage the participant in personally meaningful ways (Loeffler, 2004). This engagement has been described by leisure researchers as flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990) and peak experience (Maslow, 1968). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes flow as "the way people describe their state of mind when consciousness is harmoniously ordered, and they want to pursue whatever they are doing for its own sake" (p. 6). Peak experiences are said to occur when an individual feels fulfilled, extremely satisfied and/or deeply happy (Maslow, 1968). Both flow and peak experiences exist in a variety of circumstances. For example, in his discussion of why people are drawn to climb mountains, Mitchell (1983) described the experience as an exploration of the natural world resulting in an intimate dialogue between the individual and the environment. He further elaborated that the "sublimity of mountain climbing manifests in two ways: as an environment to be experienced and as a medium for creative expression" (p. 143). Flow and peak experiences may also be present within the retail environment. Indeed, recreational shopping has been conceptualized as "unique and memorable experiences" which appeal to all the senses (Morgan, 2006, p. 306).

The experience of leisure is thought to be influenced by the *meanings* assigned by the actors to the various elements of the leisure episode (Ragheb, 1996). For example, early work by Ellis (1973) suggested that leisure and recreation provide numerous meanings for the participants including self-expression, mental stimulation, relaxation, cognitive development, and competency. Ellis explained that although these 'meanings' vary in nature, they all have the potential to "balance or to fill what is missing" in a person's life. In their study on meanings in the domains of work, family, community and leisure, Kelly and Kelly (1994) concluded that leisure has social meanings and contexts related to other roles, especially the family and other intimate communities. The authors found that leisure meanings are related to items such as freedom, expressivity, focusing on the experience, and self-determination.

These comments suggest that an experience like shopping will be very much influenced by the meanings assigned to that activity by the consumer. Prus and Dawson (1991) suggest that meanings are reflected in the ways in which people "involve their selves" in shopping activities (p. 149). For example, the authors propose that shoppers attach meaning to the shopping activity because it provides an avenue for enjoying the company of friends, family and/or other like-minded shoppers. In addition, Prus and Dawson identified several aspects which made shopping a meaningful activity for the recreational shopper; (a) experiencing novelty, (b) pursuing particular interests or fascinations, (c) displaying one's self to others, (d) communicating with others, and (e) exhibiting competence. Meaningful shopping experiences may also involve the excitement of planning for the shopping trip, the anticipation of shopping with another person, followed by the trip to the shopping destination as well as the post-trip recollection (Pooler, 2003).

Consequently, leisure activities are not "chosen haphazardly but are experiences based on real needs, contributing to both the meaning of leisure itself and the search for it" (Ragheb, 1996, p. 247). Leisure pursuits are often selected for their potential outcomes and benefits (Melamed, Meir, & Samson, 1995). For example, Mannell and Kleiber (1997) observe that possible benefits of leisure experiences include pleasure, relaxation, and fun. The authors suggest that people seek out such benefits to avoid discomfort and pain as well as to enhance their quality of life. Likewise, consumer behaviour researchers advocate that consumers in bad moods may choose to go shopping to cheer themselves up (Woodruffe-Burton, Eccles, & Elliott, 2002; Gardner, 1985; Rook, 1987). Woodruffe-Burton et al. note that shoppers describe the kinds of feelings which accompany the shopping process as "making them feel good, happy, satisfied" and in some cases, a feeling of "high" (p. 262).

Arguably, both leisure and shopping experiences are strongly influenced by the participant's personal values, motivations, expectations and perceptions. To better understand how leisure and shopping experiences are facilitated, the following section will highlight the importance of settings in providing such experiences.

The Setting: The Retail Environment

Shopping takes place in a wide variety of retail environments, ranging from outdoor markets and fairs (Hine, 2002) to the World Wide Web (Parsons, 2002). While traditional markets and fairs offer the unique pleasures of personally getting to know both merchants and fellow buyers, Hine (2002) notes that many markets today only operate one day a week, or for a few days each year. The advent of the Internet as a shopping medium focuses on offering a convenient, anonymous and impersonal way of shopping (Parsons, 2002). Yet the majority of consumers still want a "shopping experience," and are not looking to simply make a purchase.

The shopping mall remains one of the more pervasive retail environments (Moss, 2007) which offer a combination of all these elements. As such, the mall was considered as the representative leisure setting in this study.

Since their initial conceptualization and creation in the mid-1950s, shopping malls have become fixtures in most modern day cities (Martin & Turley, 2004). Over the years, the mall has evolved from being a convenient 'one-stop shop' for necessary products to being a most entertaining environment for many people (Bloch, Ridgway, & Dawson, 1994; Moss, 2007). In his book, *Shopping as an Entertainment Experience*, Moss (2007) argues that "going to the mall" fulfills more purposes than pure consumption and "many people simply go to the mall rather than go anywhere else" (p.45-46).

One of the most significant trends associated with mall development is their evolution into leisure and social spaces (Martin & Turley, 2004). Jackson (1991) observed that "every day, millions of people wander through enclosed malls" (p.280) and for an astonishing number of shoppers, visiting the mall has become a way of life. "People may now come to the mall without [ever] intending to buy a single thing." Whether it is to "hang out" or to socialize, a dominant motivation to visit the mall is the simple desire "to have fun" (Moss, 2007, p. 48).

Recreational shoppers may visit malls because of the sensory aspects of the retail environment including its sights, sounds, and smells. Whereas avid campers seek the wilderness as their leisure space, the mall provides recreational shoppers their ideal leisure 'habitat' (Bloch, et al. 1994). For example, recreational shoppers may report an increase in enjoyment while at the mall because such a visit transports them away from their normal environment. The shoppers seem to enjoy the activity as a kinesthetic experience because it gives them the pleasure of

moving about freely among the few spaces that are open to the general public (Cox, Cox, & Anderson, 2005).

Research Purpose

Despite shopping's popularity as a recreational activity and its apparent significance in many consumers' lives, it is surprising that the leisure literature has traditionally devoted so little attention to the leisure potential of recreational shopping (Jackson, 1991). There are a few notable exceptions. For example, an early study by Johnson and Mannell (1983) studied the mall as a leisure environment. Similarly, Roberts (1987) explored factors influencing the leisure use of shopping malls. A few years later, Dimanche and Samdahl (1994) made reference to "leisure shopping" (p. 123) in their essay on leisure as symbolic consumption. However, the vast majority of studies on recreational shopping have appeared in the fields of consumer behaviour, marketing and retailing, and consumer business. These fields typically focus on defining shopper typologies, shopping motivations, and shopping patterns and preferences (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Dellaert, Arentze, Bierlaire, Borgers, & Timmermans, 1998; Lesser & Hughes, 1986).

While it is important for retailers and mall managers to understand consumers' buying habits and their use of shopping malls for the purpose of increasing profits, it is equally important to look beyond the consumptive nature of shopping. As leisure researchers, it is desirable to study all forms of leisure experiences, whether they are good or bad. According to Horne (2002), "for some shoppers there is no split between shopping and recreation…If recreation is supposed to be an activity, exercised for its own sake, having no aim other than gratification and shopping is carried out to keep only happily occupied, then it is also recreation" (pg. 96). Consequently, this research examined the intrinsic meanings of shopping and explored

the experiential aspects of the recreational shopping experience (including the influences of the retail environment on individuals who regularly engage in recreational shopping).

In order to examine these issues, the following research questions were explored:

1) What characterizes a recreational shopping experience?

    a) What specific leisure dimensions (*e.g.* freedom, intrinsic satisfaction, pleasure, etc.) can be identified during a recreational shopping experience?

    b) How do the participants describe an ideal shopping *experience*?

    c) How do the participants describe an ideal shopping *setting*? (*e.g.* novelty, variety, other shoppers, etc.)

2) What conditions influence the recreational shopping experience?

    a) Do recreational shoppers consider settings and atmospherics to be important to their shopping experience?

    b) Are there conditions which make a recreational shopping experience more or less enjoyable than a utilitarian trip?

3) What meanings do recreational shoppers assign to recreational shopping?

    a) What motivations do participants report for their shopping behaviours?

    b) Do the participants define themselves through shopping behaviour? (*e.g.* exploring sense of self; acting out roles and exploring different roles; etc.)

    c) Does recreational shopping play an important social role in the participants' lives? If so, how so?

4) What are the outcomes of the recreational shopping experience?

a) What psychological outcomes (*e.g.* sense of competence, growth, and accomplishment; positive mood enhancement; etc.) accrue from the participants' shopping experience?

b) Do the participants have defined expectations in terms of outcomes and/or benefits when they go shopping?

c) How do the participants describe the outcomes and/or benefits of their shopping experience?

This research will add to our understanding of the recreational shopping experience. The final product focused on the perspective of the study's informants but as interpreted through the researcher's lens.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This review presents a blend of information taken from both the leisure field and the business field. Although the two bodies of literature represent distinct perspectives, there appears to be many significant parallels between leisure and recreational shopping. This chapter begins with a presentation of the definitions of leisure and of shopping. Following this, the discussion will illustrate the related fields in the leisure and recreational shopping literature, specifically the motives, settings, experiences and the outcomes of recreational shopping.

Definitions

Definitions of leisure

Leisure is often defined and operationalized as an objective or subjective phenomenon (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). As an objective phenomenon, leisure is understood as quantifiable and observable behaviour. Such behaviours typically occur during non-work time and may involve expenditures of money and/or time, as well as participation in particular types of activities (Unger & Kernan, 1983). This understanding of leisure, however, has been criticized for its "external definitional vantage point" since it is often the researchers who assume that specific activities have a common meaning and are defined as leisure by all those engaged (Parr & Lashua, 2004, p. 2). Other researchers have commented that when leisure is equated with quantity, it implies a "more is better" argument when quite the opposite might be true (Unger & Kernan, 1983, p. 381). Furthermore, Unger and Kernan believe that "leisure has existential elements which extend beyond time constraints or structured activities" (p. 381).

In light of these comments, leisure scholars have also proposed subjective definitions of leisure which begins "with the state of mind, the orientation, the attitudes, the experience, or the

definition of the leisure actor" (Kelly, 1996, p. 21). As a subjective phenomenon, leisure is understood to be the "…mental experience [of an individual] while engaged in leisure activities and the satisfaction or meanings derived from these involvements" (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997, p. 55). The subjective approach to defining leisure is operationalized both externally (from the researcher's perspective) and internally (from the research participant's perspective) (Parr & Lashua, 2004). In Neulinger's (1981) early description of subjective leisure, he developed a paradigm that includes three dimensions: perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, and non-instrumentality. According to Neulinger, the leisure actor understands that what she or he is doing has been freely chosen for reasons intrinsic to the activity rather than as a means to another end. Similarly, Kelly (1996) argues that "leisure is the perception of free choice for the sake of doing or experiencing" (p. 21).

In line with an experiential perspective, Parker (1996) states that "…value, meaning and even enjoyment of activity are based on the perceptions of the individual who lends value and meaning to it" (p. 69). Thus, subjective definitions of leisure are located within the consciousness of the leisure actor, positioning her or him as the primary mediator of the leisure experience (Seller & Boshoff, 2006; see also Kelly, 2000; McDowell, 1984). Seller and Boshoff suggest that individuals are capable of authoring, or creating leisure experiences when engaging in activities which possess and engender certain idiosyncratic meanings.

Additionally, leisure is an action which takes place at a given time, develops an identifiable activity and is perceived as a pleasant experience by the actor (Ateca-Amestoy, Serrano-del-Rosal, & Vera-Toscano, 2008). In this present study, recreational shopping was identified as the action context in which the meanings of leisure and the subjective determinants of leisure experiences will be more deeply explored.

Definitions of shopping

The business literature suggests two fundamental categories or types of shopping. The first is economic or utilitarian shopping (Bäckstrom, 2006) whereby the activity is undertaken to acquire the goods required for daily use (Ng, 2003). This type of shopping is characterized as task-related and rational. Its goal is typically one of product acquisition (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). When engaged in economic or utilitarian shopping, participants are often neutral to the activity and approach the experience from a time- or money-saving perspective (Bäckstrom, 2006; Bellenger & Korgaonkar, 1980). In addition, Prus and Dawson (1991) suggest that economic or utilitarian shopping subsumes images of "ambiguous, unavoidable, and boring" (p. 149). Shopping in this sense of meaning is placed on a level with hard work (Bäckstrom, 2006).

Conversely, the category of recreational shopping is typically defined as an activity which consumers enjoy as a leisure-time pursuit (Bäckstrom, 2006; Bellenger & Korgaonkar, 1980). Research in this type of shopping typically emphasizes the experiential value of shopping and the satisfaction realized from the activity (Bäckstrom, 2006). Bellenger and Korgaonkar (1980) speculate that, for recreational shopping, the focus is on the "enjoyable use of time without respect to the purchase of goods or services" (p. 79). In addition, recreational shopping is characterized by hedonic value (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994). Babin and his colleagues suggest that "hedonic value is more subjective and personal than its utilitarian counterpart and results more from fun and playfulness than from task completion" (p. 646). Thus, shopping is valued for its potential entertainment and emotional worth and "the purchase of goods may be incidental to the experience of shopping" (p. 646). Shopping in the recreational sense tends to preserve conceptions of the activity as primarily directed towards the enjoyment of shopping

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activity. Therefore, purchasing may be considered as secondary to other elements found within the experience (Bäckstrom, 2006).

While it appears that the two categories of shopping sit on opposite ends of a continuum, Bäckstrom (2006) argues that such is not the case. Both types of shopping contribute to the overall satisfaction of a consumer's retail experience and need not be mutually exclusive (Batra &Ahtola, 1990). Recreational shopping, the focus of this study, can involve both "task-related, or product-acquisition, *and* hedonic value through responses evoked during the experience" (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994, p. 645). It seems worthwhile to explore variations in the consumer actions performed while engaged in recreational shopping and the meanings ascribed to the activity by various consumers (Bäckstrom, 2006). Consequently, this study explored shopping's role in the everyday life of consumers in order to reach a more complete understanding of the activity's leisure potential and the nature of the experience.

Motives for Leisure and Recreational Shopping

The concept of 'motives' has been proposed by leisure researchers as a way to explain why people engage in leisure activities. Mannell and Kleiber (1997) describe motives as "something that impels people to action and gives direction to that action once it is aroused or activated" (p.188). A number of motives for leisure and recreational shopping will be considered here. Specifically, this section will discuss the 'seeking and escaping' motive as well as the motivational importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic variables.

Iso-Ahola (1982) proposed that the satisfaction which individuals expect to derive from their involvement in a leisure activity is linked to two fundamental motivational forces, those of seeking and escaping. He suggested that individuals perceive a leisure activity as a potential satisfaction-producer for two primary reasons. First, it provides certain intrinsic rewards, such as

feelings of mastery and competence, and it helps them escape their routine environments. In support of this idea, Mannell and Kleiber (1997) stated that

> By escaping the everyday environment, a person can leave behind their personal and/or interpersonal worlds. The personal world refers to escape from personal problems, troubles, difficulties and failures, and the interpersonal world refers to other people such as co-workers, friends, and family members. (p. 201)

The seeking dimension refers to both the personal and interpersonal satisfactions which people may seek through their leisure experience. Personal satisfactions include feelings of achievement, relaxation, ego-enhancement and prestige. On the other hand, interpersonal satisfactions refer to social interaction and connectedness (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). Dunn Ross and Iso-Ahola's (1991) study of tourists' found that motives for travelling and subsequent satisfactions support the importance of seeking and escaping. The researchers found that participants were primarily motivated by knowledge seeking, opportunities for social interaction and escape from daily troubles, work and other obligatory tasks.

Barnett (2006) identified 'sensation seekers' as another dimension of 'seeking and escaping'. He characterized 'sensation seekers' as individuals who have a need for varied, novel, and complex stimuli. The connection between leisure experiences and sensation seeking could stem from an individual's need for 'optimal arousal' (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). Optimal arousal suggests that each person has a level of arousal that is optimal, ideal, or psychologically comfortable. The authors propose that each person is in a continuous process of seeking and avoiding opportunities to maintain this comfortable level. Barnett (2006) also suggests that people are motivated by the "self-as-entertainment" construct which reflects the capacity of people to optimize their leisure experiences in three ways: by the perception that they are in control of how and what they do in their free time ("self"); by being able to use their mind

through their imagination and escape to fantasy to fill free time ("mind play"); or by going

places and seeking out other people to share experiences ("environment") (p. 448).

Themes in the business literature regarding recreational shopping generally parallel those

on sensation seeking as discussed above. In particular, the motives of 'seeking and escaping'

have been identified. For example, an early proposition by Tauber (1972) suggested that

shopping is motivated by a consumer's need for attention; a desire to be with peers and/or people

with similar interests; and a need for a diversion from the routine of daily life. Prus and

Dawson's (1991) examination of recreational shoppers' participation in the marketplace supports

Tauber's proposition. Prus and Dawson found that recreational shoppers enjoy shopping

because it is "something to fill in time" and "going out [is] better than sitting around the house

all the time" (p. 150). The authors also found that their respondents characterized shopping as an

attractive alternative to entertaining people at home, going out for walks, attending the movies,

and other leisure pursuits.

The importance of such stimulation seems to emerge whenever recreational shopping is

discussed. In her early study of consumer behaviour, Hirschman (1980) suggested that some

shoppers seek cognitive or informational stimulation. For example, Hirschman speculates that

consumers may seek information in an effort to improve their product expertise within the retail

environment. Others may be more likely to seek sensory stimulation in the shopping

experience. This is not surprising given that Bloch, Ridgeway and Sherrell (1989) characterized

the retail setting as a novelty and information rich environment.

Neulinger (1981) noted the considerable satisfaction which might be gained from leisure

activities. He characterized the motivation behind participation as either intrinsic or extrinsic.

"If the satisfaction stems from engaging in the activity itself, then we are dealing with *intrinsic*

motivation; if it results from some payoff from the activity, we have a case of *extrinsic motivation*" (Neulinger, 1981, p. 17). Although not referring specifically to recreational shopping, Iso-Ahola (1999) offers some insight into the appeal of this activity. He suggested that whenever possible, people prefer intrinsically motivating activities because:

1. They are autonomous and self-determined.
2. They facilitate people's attempts to pursue and achieve optimum levels of sensory stimulation and arousal.
3. They are conducive to feelings of personal competence.
4. They are inherently enjoyment- and satisfaction-producing. (p. 43)

This is not to say, however, that leisure activities are only intrinsically motivated. For example, a number of studies conducted in exercise and recreation settings adopt the two-motivational dimension approach which includes both extrinsic and intrinsic factors (Alexandris, Kouthouris, & Girgolas, 2007). In their study of recreational skiers, Alexandris et al. found that a skier's intention to continue skiing is motivated by intrinsic factors such as "for the pleasure it gives me to know more about skiing", "for the satisfaction I experience while I am perfecting my skills", and "for the pleasure I feel in trying exciting experiences" (p. 655). The respondents also expressed extrinsic motivations such as "because people around me think it is important to be in shape", "because skiing helps me feel good about myself", and "because it is a good way to learn things which could be useful to me in other areas of my life" (p. 655). Another example is illustrated in McCarville's (2007) autoethnographic account of his leisure journey through an Ironman triathlon. He recalls that despite "the unreasonable demands such events make on diet and exercise, sleep habits and social networks…Ironman is something undertaken for its own sake" (p. 172). In addition, McCarville states that the event "carries all the benefits of playful activity" (p. 172) by offering both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (i.e. Ironman "Finisher" gear) as well as, the opportunity to both test and display a person's skills.

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The motivational importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic variables has also emerged within the recreational shopping literature. Westbrook and Black (1985) proposed seven major dimensions of shopping motivation including: anticipated utility of prospective purchases; enactment of an economic shopping role; negotiation to obtain price concessions from the seller; optimization of merchandise choice in terms of matching shoppers' needs and desires; affiliation with reference groups; exercise of power and authority in marketplace exchanges; and sensory stimulation from the retail environment. Based on their empirical study, Westbrook and Black concluded that recreational shoppers are highly involved in virtually all dimensions of shopping motivation. For this group, shopping is motivated by both functional and instrumental concerns and provides a potential arena for achievement and personal mastery (Westbrook & Black, 1985). Satisfactions derived from finding exactly what one has been searching for can offer autonomy, self-fulfillment or self-actualization. As a result, recreational shoppers may derive relatively more gratification from the process of shopping than from purchasing the merchandise sought.

Similarly, Falk (1997) suggested that the experience of shopping involves visual pleasures which have little to do with the possibility of purchase but much in common with the freedom of "just looking" (p. 183). Falk argues that the shopping mall is the ideal place in which "self-reflection through things and images is made possible" and the shopper has complete "freedom to create one's routes with all the small pauses, halts, looks and touches one chooses" (p. 183).

In summary, the motives identified in the leisure literature appear consistent with the types of human needs identified in the consumer behaviour literature. It is commonly agreed that humans have the basic psychological needs for pleasure, autonomy, novelty, sensory stimulation,

social interaction and affiliation as well as the cognitive need for information (Ng, 2003).

Mannell and Kleiber (1997) suggest that it is important and useful to identify the types of

motivations that people wish to satisfy in their leisure experience and also the types of needs-

satisfactions that are available through participation in leisure activities and contexts. Given that

the intention of this study was to gain a more holistic understanding of recreational shopping

experiences, it seems appropriate to discuss the settings in which such experiences are facilitated.

The following section will highlight the concepts and constructs related to leisure settings and

environments.

Settings for Leisure and Recreational Shopping

Considerable leisure research has been focused on how people relate to different

recreation settings and environments. "A recreation setting may be defined as a place where the

combination of physical-biological, social, and managerial characteristics or attributes gives that

place value as a locale for leisure behavior" (McCool, Stankey, & Clark, 1985, p. 1). McCool et

al. state that the setting is where leisure activity participation occurs and its attributes and

conditions can either facilitate or hinder not only the activity experience but the satisfactions

derived as well. According to the authors, recreation settings might be explored in terms of the

expectancy-valence theories of Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). Such theories conceive of

recreational experiences as being a behaviourally founded production process. McCool and his

colleagues suggest that people come to recreation sites with expectations and desires for specific

types of satisfaction. While on-site, the combination of physical, social, and managerial

conditions help the participant achieve their desired satisfactions and upon leaving the site, the

achievement of desired satisfactions is seen as leading to subsequent personal, and perhaps

societal benefits.

The prevailing approach in research on recreation settings has focused on outdoor spaces and identifying the features necessary to support specific or desired leisure experiences (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992). Williams and his colleagues suggest that leisure settings are most often represented as collections of features or attributes. For example, "It is the setting (described by its attributes) that recreationists seek, use and impact" (McCool et al., 1985, p. 2). In their review of recreation setting choice, Peterson, Stynes, Rosenthal, and Dwyer (1985) were explicit in their use of a commodity metaphor to describe recreation behaviour. Peterson et al. observe that "consumers use the [setting] attributes as input factors for a consumption technology that produces utility" (p. 20). In light of the commodity metaphor, Williams et al. (1992) further emphasize the role of setting attributes in consumers' decision-making and that the strategy "of designing recreational settings is reduced to that of identifying the most valued and optimal combination of attributes for a given clientele" (p. 30).

In an early paper, Bloch, Ridgway, and Nelson (1991) argued that the most common setting for recreational shopping is the large, enclosed shopping mall. The authors describe the shopping mall as one of the central elements in modern day leisure, offering consumers a comfortable and weatherproof environment in which they can spend both their free time and their discretionary income. Bloch and his colleagues also propose that malls are attractive leisure sites because of their "ability to provide novelty and stimulation" (p. 446). The importance of a novelty rich environment seems critical for the facilitation of recreational shopping. Westbrook and Black (1985) emphasize that consumers are motivated to seek novel and interesting stimuli as well as the notable non-purchase satisfactions derived through the shopping experience. The retail environment has the potential to provide such satisfactions due

to its constantly changing displays and merchandise which alternatively involves the sensory, emotive, and/or cognitive faculties (Bloch, Ridgway, & Nelson; Westbrook &Black).

According to the literature on leisure services, the goal of the setting is typically to encourage meaningful participation (McCarville, 2002). Kotler (1974) was the first to use the term 'atmospherics' to capture the importance of the setting in any service encounter. He defines atmospherics as the intentional control and structuring of environmental cues to create or reinforce clients' tendencies consume. There are three basic 'atmospheric' components which create a valuable service environment and they are indentified as ambient conditions, design features and social factors (Baker, 1987). Ambient conditions are those which exist below the level of a consumer's immediate awareness and include factors such as air quality, noise, scent and cleanliness. Design features include stimuli which exist at the forefront of a consumer's awareness and may be either aesthetic or functional in nature (Baker, 1987; McCarville, 2002). Baker associates aesthetic features to architectural shapes, patterns, materials, style, colours and accessories. Conversely, she relates functional features to the convenience and comfort of the environment's layout and design. The last atmospheric component, social factors, pertains to other people (*e.g.* other customers, service personnel) in the environment.

Arguably, retailers seem to excel at using atmospherics to create positive shopping environments which offer consumers value and needs satisfactions (Fiore, 2002). In their study on the sources of consumer shopping pleasure, Cox, Cox, and Anderson (2005) found that recreational shoppers tend to derive enjoyment from browsing the visual aspects of the retail environment. According to the authors, examining merchandise may satisfy the consumers' desire for exploration and novelty. In addition, shoppers may receive anticipatory or imaginative

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pleasure from simply window shopping and/or find pleasure in the sensory stimulation of

visiting a mall. As Lehoten and Mäenpää (1997) observed,

> [the] pleasure found in shopping was first connected with tourism, the idea of the
> leisurely spending of time, of going 'somewhere else'…away form the spheres of
> home and work, in order to be freed from duties and in order to enjoy oneself. (p.
> 163)

Lehoten and Mäenpää further elaborate that "…pleasurable shopping is understood

as…movement in a space where one has the possibility of making purchases…day-dreaming and

the planning of future purchases…where the openness and plurality of possibilities are

fundamental" (p. 143).

In an effort to understand the relationship between recreation settings and human

behaviour, Williams and Roggenbuck (1989) suggest that most people experience feelings of

'place attachment' which go beyond the usefulness of a particular place or setting for pursuing a

particular activity. Kyle, Bricker, Graefe, and Wickham (2004) explain that "the place

attachment construct examines the meaning places have for people and represents an emotional

or affective bond between a person and a particular place" (p. 124). The leisure literature

suggests that place attachment is composed of two components: place dependence and place

identity. According to Kyle and his colleagues, place dependence reflects the importance of a

resource for providing the amenities necessary for desired leisure activities. Place dependence is

also related to the functional meaning of a place and the tendency to view the leisure

environment as a collection of attributes which permit the pursuit of a specific activity (Kyle,

Bricker, Graefe, & Wickham, 2002; Williams & Roggenbuck, 1989).

The second construct, place identity, is conceptualized in terms of the cognitive

connection between the self and the physical environment (Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2005). An

early definition proposed by Proshansky (1978) describes place identity as,

Those dimensions of the self that define the individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals, and behavioral tendencies and skills relevant to this environment. (p. 155)

In this sense, settings can offer individuals the opportunity to construct, express and affirm their identity (Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2005). An example provided by Kyle et al. suggest that in the United States, places like National Parks, National Forests and wilderness all evoke culturally defined images which can be considered objects of leisure identification and meanings. Thus, for many Americans, while they may not have spent much time in these settings, they could still express a strong identification with them. Moore and Graefe (1994) used the example of a hiker in the White Mountains of New England. The authors suggest that the hiker might be attached to the setting because it provides the challenging trails she or he prefers, whereas another person might be equally attached to the same area because of nostalgic memories of previous trips.

Studies have also illustrated that human preference for particular leisure settings are a product of socialization processes (Kyle, Mowen, & Tarrant, 2004). According to Kyle and his colleagues, "if meaningful social relationships occur and are maintained in specific settings, than it should also be likely that these settings share some of this meaning given that they provide the context for these relationships and shared experiences" (p. 443). Kyle, Mowen and Tarrant state that proponents of this perspective have typically studied human behaviour in natural environments. The authors assert that an individual's response to the environment is determined not only by the tangible attributes of the setting (*e.g.* trees, rivers, mountains), but also on the way in which the individual has previously experienced the setting. Recent investigations have also shown that the meanings individuals ascribe to specific environments, be they built or natural, are the product of interactive processes involving the individual, the setting, and the

broader social world. Kyle et al. further stress that the meanings individuals ascribe to spatial environments are impacted by the activities which occur within those environments and the social actors present during these activities.

Consequently, in the context of many recreational settings, a place can be valued by an individual because of its unique ability to facilitate a particular activity, or it can be valued because it is seen as special for emotional or symbolic reasons, or for both (Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2005). Williams and Roggenbuck (1989) suggest that the degree of attachment to the recreation setting is an important element in determining a person's overall satisfaction with their leisure experience.

Experiences of Leisure and Recreational Shopping

Leisure experiences are thought to occur in all aspects of life (Tinsley, Hinson, Tinsley, & Holt, 1993). In a notable paper by Tinsley and Tinsley (1986), the authors proposed a theory of leisure that focuses on the individual's subjective experience. Tinsley and Tinsley viewed leisure experiences as characterized by both cognitive and affective attributes. Cognitive attributes include concentration on the ongoing experience, forgetting of self, and decreased awareness of time. Affective attributes refer to feelings of freedom, enriched perception of objects and events, and increased intensity of emotions and sensitivity to bodily sensations. According to Tinsley and Tinsley's proposed theory, four conditions are necessary for leisure to occur. The authors advocate that

> Leisure experience occurs when individuals (1) believe they are engaged in an activity for personal reasons rather than as a result of external coercion, (2) are engaged in the activity to obtain benefits intrinsic to participation in the activity, (3) experience a facilitative level of arousal, and (4) exert a disciplined effort to fulfill their potential through engagement in the activity. Because the perception of freedom of choice is a necessary condition for the individual to experience

leisure, leisure experience will most commonly occur when participating in a leisure activity. (p. 38-39)

Tinsley and Tinsley also believe that leisure can vary in strength or intensity and may even be stressful or unpleasant at times.

Attempts have also been made to understand the characteristics of the leisure experience. Gunter (1987) replicated his previous investigation of the properties common to all leisure occurrences by having 140 undergraduate students write essays on the single most memorable leisure experience they ever had and the most common and meaningful type of leisure they experienced during their daily routines. The results of this early study lead Gunter to conclude that there are 8 characteristic properties of leisure experiences. The properties include separation, choice, pleasure, spontaneity, timeliness, fantasy, adventure, and self-realization. Furthermore, Gunter's findings characterize the leisure experience more as a motive for initially engaging in the activity rather than as a product of the experience itself.

In a similar study, Unger and Kernan (1983) investigated the determinants of subjective leisure. The researchers attempted to validate these determinants by testing them within the framework of existing leisure theory. Unger and Kernan created two questionnaires which measured the intensity of response on each statement and deduced that at least three determinants of subjective leisure (intrinsic satisfaction, perceived freedom, and involvement) are present across a variety of situational contexts. The three other proposed determinants of arousal, mastery, and spontaneity, appear to be more activity-specific. In his subsequent study, Unger (1984) offered evidence of another leisure dimension. He found that the subjective labeling of a situation as leisure is also linked to characteristics of the social context. Through the use of written scenarios to vary the contextual variables, Unger observed that situations were more

likely to be considered "leisure" if they offered companionship or entailed activities which encouraged social interaction (see also Samdahl, 1992).

The consumer behaviour literature has also recognized comparable experiential aspects of recreational shopping (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). According to Holbrook and Hirschman, the experiential perspective within shopping is "a primarily subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and esthetic criteria" (p. 132). Consumer researchers Babin, Darden and Griffin (1994) propose that recreational shopping experiences possess hedonic components. While engaged in recreational shopping, consumers may experience increased arousal, heightened involvement, perceived freedom, fantasy fulfillment, and escapism. Furthermore, Babin and his colleagues found that "vicarious consumption" and "shopping with or without purchasing" can also provide hedonic value because the shopper can "enjoy looking around and imagining what one day [they] would actually have money to buy" (p. 646).

In a recent shopping study, Hart, Farrell, Stachow, Reed, and Cadogan (2007) identified four dimensions which they believe are central to an enjoyable shopping experience. The authors considered accessibility, environment, atmosphere, and service personnel in terms of their relevance in defining shopping as a holistic entity. Hart and her colleagues analyzed the relationship between enjoyments of the shopping experience; intentions to repatronize the shopping centre; and gender influence. Their findings revealed that men's enjoyment of a shopping experience may be driven by desires for efficiency and feelings of accomplishment when they are able to fulfill certain shopping experience expectations. "On the other hand, for women, enjoyment is related to shopping as a leisure activity" (Hart, Farrell, Stachow, Reed, and

Cadogan, 2007, p. 597).   Women find pleasure in browsing and investing time in comparison of

available alternatives before making purchase decisions.

Pooler (2003) also reports that shopping enthusiasts experience a heightened state of

emotional arousal as well as a higher-than-normal level of adrenaline which results purely from

the act of shopping. Similarly, Jin and Sternquist (2004) characterize shopping as a fun,

pleasurable activity which can lead to genuine feelings of "joy" (p. 2). Jin and Sternquist suggest

that shopping enthusiasts derive their joy not just from purchasing but also from the "hunt" (p.

2). Furthermore, Pooler (2003) suggests that a significant aspect of shopping involves "the thrill

of the chase" (p. 89). He notes that shoppers may experience an increased level of exhilaration

while "hunting" for their "shopping prey" (p. 91) and once the hunt is completed there is a sense

of accomplishment and victory. Pooler goes on to note that the thrill gained from the hunt itself

is more important than that gained from acquiring the product being pursued.

Shopping enjoyment has also been linked to entertaining shopping experiences (Jones,

1999). For example, Fischer and Arnold (1990) found that some shoppers "appear to derive their

gratification mostly from immediate hedonic pleasure" and for such shoppers, being in a mall is

similar to being "a kid in the candy store" (p. 334). Lehoten and Mäenpää (1997) describe

shopping as a form of play where shoppers use products and people as stimulants to their

imagination and hedonistic fantasizing. They found that shoppers experience "an openness to

everything and anything, [and an] endless curiosity for something new" (p. 158). In addition,

Lehoten and Mäenpää state that the characteristics of shopping as a leisure activity are:

spontaneity and impulsiveness; the ability and willingness to change plans on the spur of the

moment; the mood of relaxed strolling; and the susceptibility to changes in direction and route

while in the shopping mall. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) had also elaborated on the notion

of shopping as entertaining and playful. The authors suggested that the criteria for a pleasurable shopping experience are essentially "esthetic in nature" and hinge on an appreciation of the activity for its own sake, apart from any utilitarian function and material gain.

Examining leisure experiences

The goal of this section is to explore the leisure experience in ways that inform and direct subsequent discussions of recreational shopping. To begin, considerable research has focused on meanings assigned to the leisure experience. For example, decades ago, Shaw (1985) noted the importance of meaning in people's leisure lives. It is not surprising then that there has been a significant emphasis on exploring how people perceive the meaning of leisure experiences (Langenhove, 1992). Research into the meaning of leisure has examined the values and satisfactions associated with leisure. For example, early research by Donald and Havighurst (1959) defined the "meaning of leisure" as "what the actor says a favorite activity means to him in terms of the satisfactions he gets from it" (p. 355). The authors hypothesized that meanings are systematically related to the content of preferred leisure activities as well as to personal and socio-demographic characteristics. Donald and Havighurst generated 12 meaning statements from pilot interviews and literature on leisure and play and asked their informants to indentify authors discovered seven commonly mentioned meanings including: for sheer pleasure, a change from work, a new experience, contacts with friends, feelings of achievement, passing time and being creative. In a similar study on leisure meanings, Kleiber, Caldwell, and Shaw (1993) required subjects to respond to the question: "What does leisure mean to you in five words or less?" (p. 102). The study concluded that five meaning categories can be found in leisure: relaxing/doing nothing, free time, free choice, enjoyment and activities (Watkins & Bond, 2007).

Freysinger (1995) explored the meaning of leisure for middle-aged adults. She used an extensive list of interview questions probing subjects' interpretations of their personal experiences of leisure, family, work, education and adulthood. Freysinger then offered a framework that identified 'leisure as change' in which freedom of choice and control results in feelings of enjoyment, relaxation, and rejuvenation. In addition, it was discovered that "at a deeper level of meaning, leisure was seen as a social context for developing affiliation with family and friends and a source of personal development through opportunities for self-expression and learning" (Watkins & Bond, 2007, p. 288).

The work-like nature of shopping suggests that feelings of control, freedom, enjoyment, or personal development might be rare for the shopper. Certainly, shopping does have the potential to offer both leisure and work like opportunities. As a result, the next section considers the possible interplay between work and leisure.

Comparing meanings in leisure and work

Leisure meanings have often been explored by comparing leisure with non-leisure phenomena (Watkins & Bond, 2007). For example, Mobily's (1989) early study on the meanings of recreation and leisure asked adolescents to respond to leisure as a stimulus word and record other words they associated with leisure. The response words most consistently associated with leisure included perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, a low work relation, self-expression, involvement, free-time, passive activity, and positive affect including enjoyment, fun and relaxation. Conversely, work was consistently described as hard, money, labour, and cleaning. Parr and Lashua (2005) surveyed a group of students on their perceptions of leisure. The researchers found that the students overwhelmingly agreed with the statements of 'what is leisure for one person may not be leisure for someone else', 'leisure represents an

important context for individuals to develop their full potential as human beings', 'leisure is a state of mind or experience', and 'leisure is important for the positive outcomes it produces for individuals' (p. 20).

A study by Iso-Ahola (1979a) examined theoretical models of leisure and proposed eight activity scenarios around determinants of leisure and work. Subjects were asked to rate which of the scenarios meant leisure to them and the findings indicated that perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation and a low work orientation are key elements of leisure. Shaw (1984) combined material from literature, subject provided diaries, and interviews to ascertain the perceptual factors adults used to describe the meanings of leisure and non-leisure situations. According to Shaw, the factors most consistently used to differentiate leisure from work were perceived choice, intrinsic motivation, enjoyment, relaxation, and the lack of evaluation.

This review of the literature suggests that leisure is a function of experiences which may be characterized by fun, feelings of mastery, and relaxation. Researchers have also proposed that the leisure experience draws from the meaning of the activity to the individual, not from the activity itself (Ateca-Amestoy et al., 2008). The personal meanings assigned to leisure experiences are also influenced by the social context and the personal satisfactions derived from the experience. Indeed, the recreational nature of shopping suggests characteristics and meanings which are parallel to leisure experiences, and hence the following section will examine such parallels.

A shopping perspective

Recreational shopping can be laden with meaning. While exploring the cultural and social meanings of gift-shopping, Fischer and Arnold (1990) proposed that 'shopping for gifts' not only maintains but reinforces familial and social bonds. Their findings indicated that the

process of 'searching for a gift', 'buying a gift' and 'giving a gift' convey messages of love, affection, and esteem to the recipient.

Pooler (2003) also considered the social meaning of shopping and suggested that, "like many leisure activities, part of the mentality of shopping is that it be carried out with others" (p. 83). According to him, a meaningful shopping experience extends well beyond the confines of a mall and includes the "preshopping warm-up" and the "postshopping analysis" (p. 83). The preshopping warm-up involves the excitement of planning for the shopping trip, the anticipation of shopping with another person, followed by the trip to the shopping destination. For some shopping enthusiasts, the preshopping warm-up is the "beginning of an event that is expected, perhaps more than anything, to be a fun social outing" (p. 83). Furthermore, Pooler noted that the postshopping analysis includes the experience following the social shopping trip whereby consumers will compare and review ideas as well as mentally revisit the experience they shared together.

Rhythms within a leisure experience

Researchers have also noted the multi-dimensional nature of leisure experiences (Lee, Dattilo, & Howard, 1994). The authors note that leisure experiences may be characterized by a variety of phases including positive experiences as well as stressful or unpleasant ones. Lee, Dattilo, and Howard further suggest that people's feelings and meanings can change over the course of the leisure experience. For example, leisure scholars Hull, Stewart, and Yi (1992) examined short term changes in hiking trips by recording the subjects' moods on a 20 item questionnaire administered at 12 predetermined moments during the hike. The authors concluded that a leisure experience pattern may show peaks in satisfactions, lulls in boredom,

peaks in excitement, and peaks in relaxation. In addition, moods often change in response to site characteristics.

In Lee, Dattilo, and Howard's (1994) study, definitional and post-hoc perspectives on leisure were assessed using in-depth interviews. The researchers also investigated immediately recalled conscious experiences by having participants carry a tape-recorder and report their experiences associated with specific events directly to the tape-recorder. Since the method is an event-contingent approach, it attempts to avoid losing important leisure experiences. The interview questions inquired about the participants' definition of leisure and the responses revealed that pleasurable characteristics such as enjoyment, relaxation, and freedom are most prominent during leisure experiences (Watkins & Bond, 2007). Furthermore, "pleasurable meanings were found to remain in subjects' memories well after the experience while stressful meanings faded over time" (Lee, Dattilo, & Howard, 1994, p. 289).

Outcomes of Leisure and Recreational Shopping Experiences

A benefit resulting from leisure refers to "a change that is viewed to be advantageous – an improved condition, or a gain to the individual" (Driver, Brown, & Peterson, 1991, p. 4). Among leisure scholars, it is widely recognized that leisure participation has a beneficial effect on satisfaction, psychological well-being and health (Melamed, Meir, & Samson, 1995; see also Coleman, 1993; Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993). The authors note that the psychological aspects considered conducive to leisure's positive outcomes include the opportunity for skills utilization, self-expression and self-actualization, need gratification, freedom of choice, and lastly, an avenue to develop one's sense of competence, autonomy and self-determination.

Business researchers Prus and Dawson (1991) proposed that recreational shopping can also be considered a meaningful leisure experience when it is seen as involving an easier, more

relaxed, or pressure-free activity. The authors state that "in this way shopping represents a way

of exercising control over one's fate; it provides an indication to oneself that one can

competently shape particular situations" (p. 152). Prus and Dawson were particularly interested

in the situated nature of shoppers' participation in the marketplace and the significance of

shoppers' sense of self and meaningfulness of their market activities. Based on their text from

open-ended interviews, the researchers identified "shopping as recreation" to encompass the

notions of interesting, enjoyable, entertaining, and leisurely. In more extreme instances,

recreational shopping denotes favorite, exciting, and even fascinating involvement. In contrast,

shopping as laborious activity was described as ambiguous, unavoidable, frustrating, rushed,

forced, wearying, boring and demeaning.

One possible outcome or benefit of leisure experiences is what Mannell and Kleiber

(1997) refer to as 'psychological hedonism: pleasure-relaxation-fun theories'. According to the

authors, hedonism as a psychological theory refers to the fact that people behave in such a way

as to seek pleasure and to avoid discomfort and pain (see also Chaplin, 1985). They propose that

the power of hedonism, as a psychological need, is thought to be in the pleasure that is

experienced when leisure actors are fulfilled or satisfied by their experience. Mannell and

Kleiber further elaborate that

> Pleasure-relaxation-fun theories suggest that people seek fun or pleasurable
> experiences in their leisure and that these relatively brief and transient
> experiences not only enhance the quality of the present moment, but that
> cumulatively, they can 'spice up' and enhance long-term psychological well-
> being. (p. 287)

Distinctions have also been made among the psychological notions of fun, pleasure, and

enjoyment (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). The authors suggest that pleasure is a feeling of

contentment that results when one's various needs are satisfied and expectations are met. 'Fun'

is described by Podilchak (1991) as an active social structuring in direct interaction, wherein the leisure actor is externally or interactively engaged with another person. In comparison, enjoyment involves experiences that are not only pleasurable, but that are accompanied by the additional benefits of, a feeling of increased competence and growth, a sense of forward movement, a sense of novelty, and a sense of accomplishment. Leisure experiences have also been shown to evoke positive mood states and to be more associated with positive and desirable moods and emotions compared to any other type of daily activity (Barnett, 2006; see also Mannell, Zuzanek, & Larson, 1988).

The discussion provided above noted that the symbolic meaning of an activity can structure and enhance the experience enjoyed as a result of taking part in that activity. The leisure literature also notes that the outcome of a leisure experience can be very much influenced by the symbolic meaning assigned to that activity (Dimanche & Samdahl, 1994). Dimanche and Samdahl further note that in both leisure literature and consumer behaviour literature, leisure activity is portrayed as an important representation of some aspect of the self. The authors explain that for consumers, "sign value" reflects the unspoken statement that a purchase or a consumptive activity presumably conveys features about their self (see also Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Mick, 1986). Dimanche and Samdahl argue that in leisure theory, a comparable meaning is portrayed in concepts of self-expression and further emphasize that leisure allows for the presentation or exploration of different facets of a person's identity. Lastly, the authors observe that a common aspect of both consumer theory and leisure theory is the proposition that an activity might be influenced by the impression that a person wishes to convey through participation or product purchase.

While much of the focus in consumer behaviour research has been on the consumption of products, Dimanche and Samdahl (1994) advocate that leisure researchers consider the work which has been done on the consumption of experiences. For example, the authors note that experiential consumption is "primarily symbolic and reflects a subjective state of consciousness that is heavily dependent on symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and aesthetic criteria" (p. 122; see also Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Dimanche and Samdahl further suggest that 'sign value' is an important component of experiential consumption, which is often motivated by a shopping enthusiast' tendency to seek experiences that will enhance their self-identity and self-concept.

Perhaps one of the best examples of the parallel between consumptive sign value and the theoretical nature of leisure is Kelly's (1983) early discussion on leisure identities. Kelly suggested that the roles and identities which are assumed during a leisure experience can be used to reflect different images of the self. This symbolic portrayal of the self is an integral component of both leisure and recreational shopping, allowing individuals the opportunity to try out new identities for fun and fantasy (Dimanche & Samdahl, 1994; Lehoten & Mäenpää, 1997). Glaser (1973) further elaborated on the link between identity and leisure consumption by suggesting that "the primary aim in shopping expeditions is not to purchase but to perceive and to reaffirm a satisfactory identity. People go out shopping to redefine their own perception of what should be the ideal to aim at" (p. 57). Consequently, Dimanche and Samdahl advocate that the potential satisfaction derived from both leisure and recreational shopping is dependent on the degree to which both of these experiences successfully affirms aspects of the private self, social self, or both.

Conclusion

Roberts (2006) observes that "nowadays it is difficult for leisure researchers to decide how to treat shopping" (p. 191). The author notes that the customary practice by leisure researchers is to classify shopping as one of the chores which simply has to be done. Evidence from this literature review however, has illustrated the strong potential for shopping to be a profound leisure experience offering meaningful aspects and positive outcomes. The literature also indicates that recreational shopping experiences are considerably influenced by both the actors and the setting. For many shopping enthusiasts, shopping can be a leisure pursuit which revolves around social relationships and personal satisfactions, rather than the purchase of goods or services. Roberts argues that shopping is a lead example of how modern divisions and categories are blurred. He asserts that times, places, and activities become impossible to classify unambiguously as work or leisure and the only sensible question may seem to be how people subjectively experience and define their leisure pursuits. As such, this study used the methods presented in the following chapter to explore shopping's leisure role in peoples' daily lives.

Chapter Three: Method

Purpose of the Study

This research examined the intrinsic meanings of shopping and explored the experiential aspects of the recreational shopping experience. Particular attention was devoted to the influences of the retail environment on individuals who regularly engage in recreational shopping. The goal of this study was to develop a theoretical description of people's lived shopping experiences. This chapter describes the theoretical paradigm that guided study as well as the grounded theory methodology that was used. The methodological processes will also be presented.

Introduction

Brockington and Sullivan (2003) suggest that qualitative methods are best used to explore the meanings of people's worlds and the myriad experiences of social structures and interactions. The authors note that a qualitative approach to research is characterized by three commitments. First, it seeks to understand the world through interacting with, empathizing with and interpreting the actions and perceptions of its actors. Second, the researcher collects data in natural settings, rather than artificial and constructed contexts such as laboratories. Lastly, qualitative approaches tend to generate theory rather than test existing ones.

Creswell (2003) notes that rather than working deductively which means testing theories by trying to refute their hypothesis, qualitative researchers work inductively which involves building up theory from observations and "open-ended, emerging data" (p. 18). Ruyter and Scholl (1998) suggest that the usefulness of qualitative research is not determined by numbers but by "the power of words and images" (p. 8). The authors believe that by offering respondents

a creative setting in which they can express their ideas and imagination, the insights obtained are concrete and real-life like. These insights can be gained through a process consisting of analysis and meaningful integration of the views expressed by the respondents (Ruyter & Scholl, 1998; Spiggle, 1994).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical paradigm that guided this study was social constructivism (Creswell, 2003). Creswell explains that the social constructivist perspective is based on the assumption that individuals understand the world through meanings they develop and apply to their own daily experiences. Daly (2007) suggests two important ontological aspects within this paradigm: (1) there are multiple realities; and (2) context becomes very important because it shapes the way people see things and attach meanings to them. In line with these aspects, Creswell (2003) suggests that the culture and history of the environments in which people are raised often interact with the individual's creation of meaning and how they understand the realities around them. Thus, constructivist researchers often address the "processes" of interaction among individuals in the many contexts within which they live.

A social constructivist researcher using the grounded theory methodology places priority on the phenomena of study and utilizes data and analysis created through shared experiences and relationships with informants (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz explains that a constructivist approach means learning how, when, and to what extent the studied experience is embedded in larger and, often, covert situations and relationships. Subsequently, a constructivist researcher must be alert to the differences and distinctions between informants and their perceptions of the experience being studied. The constructivist researcher explores the conditions under which such differences and distinctions arise and are maintained.

Creswell (2003) notes the importance of relying on the informants' views of the situation being studied in order to make sense of (or interpret) the multiple meanings people have about the world. Constructivist grounded theorists, however, should acknowledge that "the resulting theory *depends* on the researcher's view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). Creswell (2003) further elaborates that constructivist researchers must recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation of the data. He observes that constructivists "position themselves" (p. 8) in the research to acknowledge that their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural and historical experiences.

Likewise, Charmaz (2006) emphasizes that grounded theorists "can ironically import preconceived ideas into their work when they remain unaware of their starting assumptions" (p. 131). Constructivism, therefore, fosters reflexivity, which is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Charmaz (2006) summarizes reflexivity as the "researcher's scrutiny of his or her research experience, decisions, and interpretation in ways that bring the researcher into the process and allow the reader to asses how and to what extent the researcher's interests, positions, and assumptions influenced inquiry" (p. 188).

By exploring the experiences of recreational shoppers, this study examined a combination of issues related to motivation, leisure, and shopping activities. There was also an exploration of the potential social and personal outcomes derived from recreational shopping. The focus was on understanding the activity of shopping from a leisure perspective. Social constructivism guided me in gathering "informed and sophisticated reconstructions" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 194) of lived shopping experiences. The paradigm also helped in the understanding of the extent to which shopping can be conceptualized or understood as a leisure experience.

Grounded Theory Methodology

Glaser and Strauss's book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967) first articulated grounded theory methodology and advocated the development of theories from research grounded in data rather than deducing testable hypotheses from existing theories (Charmaz, 2006). The goal of grounded theory is the careful and systematic study of the relationship of the individual's lived experience to society (Goulding, 1998). Goulding further elaborates that grounded theory is an interpretivist mode of inquiry and the informants' language, gestures, expressions and actions are all considered primary to the study of experiences.

In their early grounded theory discussions, Glaser and Strauss talked about theory emerging from data separate from the scientific observer. Charmaz (2006) later proposed that "neither data nor theories are discovered" (p. 10). Rather, both researchers and participants are part of the world being studied and the emerging data. Charmaz advocates that grounded theorists *construct* their theories through their past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices. This study was guided by Charmaz's approach to grounded theory which explicitly assumed that any theoretical rendering offers an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied experience, not an exact picture of it. Furthermore, it was assumed that the research participants' implicit meanings, experiential views, as well as my finished grounded theories are constructions of reality.

The goal of this study was to reach a substantive grounded theory on the experience of shopping as leisure from the perspective of the participants but as interpreted through the researcher's lens.

Sample and Site

Creswell (2003) suggests that the intention behind any qualitative research is to purposefully select participants and sites that will best help the researcher understand the phenomenon and respond to the research questions. Given that this was an exploratory study of shopping experiences, *purposive sampling* (Neuman, 2003) was utilized. Purposive sampling allowed me to select participants on the basis of specific criteria (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). The purpose of this sampling method is "less to generalize to a larger population than it is to gain a deeper understanding" of particular types of people (Neuman, 2003, p. 213). DeWalt & DeWalt note that a selection criterion are drawn from theory and existing literature and includes a determination of the degree of expertise of an informant as well as the articulateness of the informant. The authors suggest that researchers consider the following questions when determining sample criteria: What do you want to know, and from what kinds of people (*e.g.* experts, participants)?; Does the informant know about what the researcher wants to know about?; and lastly, Will the informant be detailed in their answers?

Consequently, this study relied on purposive sampling and the following participant criteria were established: 1) each study participant must be a self-proclaimed recreational shopper, 2) study participants must actively choose to go shopping during their leisure or free time, 4) study participants must enjoy shopping, 3) she must be willing to participate in the research study, and 4) at the time of the study, she must not have any familial shopping responsibilities (e.g. shopping for her own household/spouse/children/dependents, etc.). This study only included young women between the ages of 25 to 30 and who grew up in Canada. I approached individuals whom had already expressed an interest in this study.

This study took place in various shopping malls located in Toronto, Ontario. Given that leisure pursuits are characterized by intrinsic motivation as well as a sense of freedom and autonomy (Iso-Ahola, 1999), I allowed the participants to choose a mall of their liking (and convenience) for their shopping experience. The participants were given a two-week time frame whereby they invited me to accompany them on a recreational shopping trip. Once I was contacted by the participant, the retail location and meeting time was established and transportation was arranged accordingly.

Data Collection

The researcher's role

As an interpretive researcher who was involved in participant observation and in-depth interviews with the participants, it was necessary for me to establish a sense of trust and rapport with the study's participants. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) explain that rapport is achieved when both the participants and the researcher come to the point when each is committed to help the other reach her or his goal. Lowrey, Otnes, and McGrath (2005) suggest that a researcher who intends to "shop with consumers" (p. 176) conduct an initial meeting designed to address key topics under study. In this study, the initial contact with participants was made through phone calls designed to provide them with important information, including ethical considerations, about this study. Following this conversation, logistical details, such as meeting times and location, were arranged with participants who agreed to be included.

In consideration of the interpretive nature of this study, I was also responsible for recognizing that my understanding of the participants' shopping experiences was influenced by my own lived experiences and biases. Although this may have been a positive factor in

increasing understanding and rapport with the participants, I remained reflexive throughout the research process by keeping memos of my own views and opinions.

Participant observation – Shopping with consumers

Participant observation is a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, routines, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life experiences (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). The authors note that participant observation is also a method that combines two somewhat different processes. On one hand, pure observation seeks to completely remove the researcher from the actions and behaviours of the informants so that the researcher is unable to influence the situations being studied. Conversely, pure participation has been described as "going native" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 18) and involves a researcher who discards the identity of investigator and adopts the identity of a full participant in the phenomenon being studied. Within these two extremes, however, researchers may employ a variety of strategies that combine varying degrees of both observation and participation. As a result, the strategy used for this study was *moderate participation* (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 20).

According to DeWalt and DeWalt, moderate participation occurs when the researcher is present at the scene of the action, is identifiable as a researcher, and occasionally interacts with the participants being observed. DeWalt and DeWalt suggest that the researcher tries to remain as unobtrusive as possible, encouraging the shopper to behave as she normally would while shopping. Within the business literature, moderate participation is reflected in Otnes, McGrath, and Lowrey's (1995) method called "shopping with consumers (SWC)" (p.97). When used by interpretive researchers, shopping with consumers involves accompanying informants into retail settings in order to generate contextually and experientially based data. Shopping with

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consumers was originally developed to include six-steps that typically required five weeks to complete (Otnes, McGrath, & Lowrey, 1995). Included in the six-steps are two researcher-accompanied shopping trips and three interview sessions. Although Otnes, McGrath, and Lowrey recommend the full six-step procedure in order to generate the type of text that will provide deep insights, variations in numerous studies are noted.

The SWC protocol has been used in a variety of consumer studies that explore aspects of shopping. For example, McGrath and Otnes (1995) used the method to study the ways in which strangers interact in the retail setting. McGrath and Otnes entered the study field as covert observers and made detailed recordings of any interactions, including verbatim remarks made by consumers. To supplement the observations, the two authors also conducted in-depth interviews with key informants. This process led McGrath and Otnes to the realization that "stranger encounters" appeared to occur accompanied by a variety of external stimuli, stemmed from variety of motives, and resulted in a variety of emotional responses and behaviours.

Miller (1998) conducted a year-long ethnography of shopping behaviour among 76 households in North London. He combined interviews with shopping trips at an array of retail sites and discovered that even mundane shopping activities have meaning for consumers which extend beyond their functional aspects of "provisioning" (p. 11). In short, Miller's use of SWC, coupled with interviews, enabled him to offer new theoretical insights into the meaning of shopping. By way of example, he was able to argue convincingly that for women, in particular, shopping enables them to express love to their families.

Sherry's (1998) extensive four-year long ethnography of Nike Town Chicago combined shopping with consumers with intercept interviews, observations, and autodriving (conducting interviews around visual stimuli such as photographs; see Heisley & Levy, 1991). The

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information derived from the application of SWC allowed Sherry to study consumers' in-store reactions to Nike Town's premium pricing policy. He also discovered the tendency of shoppers to regard Nike Town as more of a sightseeing destination than retail store, or in one consumer's words, as a "shrine" (p. 118). Sherry concluded with a comprehensive interpretation of the three-story Nike Town Chicago store as a "site magnet for secular pilgrims" (p. 141) who affirms the tenets of experientially oriented shopping.

Recently, Xia (2003) employed SWC to explore issues pertaining to internet browsing. She argued that combining interviews with shopping trips enabled her to capture incidences of functional versus recreational browsing behaviour that consumers might have forgotten or deemed unimportant to discuss. Xia also advocates the use of SWC to compare consumers' narratives of their own browsing activities with those recorded by the researcher as this will help the researcher formulate relevant questions for subsequent interviews.

Lowrey, Otnes, and McGrath (2005) conclude that shopping with consumers has demonstrated its value as a research technique which enables researchers to:

(1) learn about what different types of shopping mean to consumers;
(2) understand the significance of retail atmospherics for consumers;
(3) supplement other research techniques in order to enrich and complete both methods; and
(4) enable researchers to effectively study shopping in a longitudinal manner.
(p. 183)

Otnes et al. (1995) suggest that during the shopping trip, the researcher walk alongside the informant, observing and making frequent, abbreviated notes. Otnes et al. also suggest that when possible, the researcher record verbatim comments that the informants make in stores as well as make note of interesting interactions. An important role for the researcher doing participant observation is taking field notes (Elliott & Jankel-Elliott, 2003). Elliot and Jankel-Elliot

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provides the following list of what should be recorded ideally in order to fully contextualize the studied experience,

> *Space*: the physical place or places.
> *Actor*: the people involved.
> *Activity*: a set of related acts people do.
> *Object*: the physical things that are present.
> *Act*: single actions that people do.
> *Event*: a set of related activities that people carry out.
> *Time*: the sequencing that takes place over time.
> *Goal*: the things people are trying to accomplish.
> *Feeling*: the emotions felt and expressed. (p. 219)

Lowrey et al. suggest that the most important way to maintain the reliability and validity of the text is for the researcher to review their field notes and transfer them to a computer as soon as they are removed from the shopping site.

Based on their experience with SWC, Lowrey et al. found that some informants became more relaxed and natural in their interactions with the researchers, often requesting opinions and advice. Lowrey et al. state that "it is at this juncture that the researcher must consciously try to remain neutral in terms of offering advice without offending the informant in the process" (p. 178). In addition, Lowrey et al. observe that shopping with consumers requires great patience and self-restraint on the part of the researcher. Participants will each have very different shopping styles, and the role of the researcher is to offer as little interference as possible.

For this study, a pre-test was conducted with a volunteer that fit the participant criteria. During the shopping trip, it was discovered that the volunteer was often ill at ease while I maintained my position as an unobtrusive observer. It was therefore determined that I should take a more active role during the shopping trip in order to engage the participants in conversation and make them feel more comfortable during the study process. Consequently, for the actual studies considered in the analysis, I walked alongside the informants asking questions

directly related to their shopping activities and the emotions they felt while shopping. During the

shopping portion of the study which lasted between 1.5 to 2 hours, I recorded verbatim

comments made by the participants and also made note of their emotional reactions to particular

situations such as discovering a bargain or seeing an item that they have been contemplating for

a long time. I then conducted an in-depth face-to-face interview with each participant at the mall

after the shopping portion was completed.

As recommended by Lowrey et al. (2005), the participants of this study were encouraged

to shop as "naturally" (p. 177) as possible, which meant permitting others to join in their trip if

they would normally do so. Three of the informants did bring along a shopping companion on

the date of their study. The shopping companion was provided with an information sheet

highlighting the study's purpose and ethical considerations. The shopping companions were not

included in my observations nor were they involved with the interview process.

Photo-elicitation

The term photo-elicitation is used to describe studies where a combination of dialogue

and photographs are used in an interview (Burt, Johansson, & Thelander, 2007). Burt,

Johansson, and Thelander suggest that "photographs act as a communication bridge between

strangers, serve as a pathway to unfamiliar subjects, and act as a 'can-opener'" (p. 450) for

interview discussions. The authors suggest that photographs sharpen the interviewees' memory

and provide stimuli which may evoke memories of smell, sound, and bodily experiences such as

perceptions of heat or cold. Burt et al. found that when impressions from different senses are

recalled, the interviewee talked more freely about their feelings and any meanings they might

attach to the retail environment. Samuels (2004) further advocates that the researcher using

photo-elicitation can expect richer descriptions, grounded in the interviewees' own lived and affective experiences, rather than a simple listing of abstract qualities.

Photo-elicitation was used by Burt et al. (2007) who attempted to capture consumer perceptions through interpretations of the visual images generated by the participants themselves. The participants in Burt et al.'s study did not have the opportunity to plan which photographs to take in advance and while on-site, they were instructed not to negotiate with each other which photographs to take. During the interview phase of their study, Burt et al. found that the photographs stimulated comments on: "aural (sounds) and tactile (feel of textiles) perceptions; abstract impressions such as sense of time and light that create a mood or atmosphere; bodily experiences such as tiredness; and embedded values such as childishness" (p. 461). In addition, when both the researcher and the informant were looking at the same photograph, differences in interpretation and meanings can be explored.

Given that this study took an inductive approach, the five participants were asked to take their own photos during their researcher-accompanied shopping trip. The participants were provided with a digital camera and asked to photograph 'anything' that made an impression during their visit to the mall (e.g. store décor, merchandise, etc.). The photographs provide tangible illustrations of the studied shopping trips and were used as a catalyst for discussion during the interviews. For ethical reasons, it is necessary to note that participants were instructed to refrain from taking pictures of other people, including their shopping companion, mall employees, and store employees.

In-depth face-to-face interview

Patton (2002) advocates that interviewing is an essential means of entering into another person's perspective and to gather their stories. He proposes that qualitative interviewing begins

with the assumption that the perspective of the informants is meaningful, knowledgeable, and able to be made explicit. Interviews are an essential element of both participant observation (shopping with consumers) and photo-elicitation. For this study, I utilized a combination of the *informal conversational interview* paired with the *general interview guide approach* (Patton, 2002). The informal conversation approach relies on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction, often as part of participant observation fieldwork. The general interview guide approach involves outlining a set of issues that are to be pursued with each of the participants. Patton suggests that this combined strategy offers the interviewer flexibility in probing and in determining when it is appropriate to explore certain issues in greater depth. This strategy also enables the interviewer to pose questions about new areas of inquiry that were not originally anticipated in the interview guide's development.

In this study, I found that the *informal conversational interview* was most useful during the shopping with consumer phase. During their shopping trip, the participants often initiated conversations about their shopping habits which gave me opportunities to ask probing questions without disrupting the natural flow of the retail experience. As previously mentioned, the in-depth interviews followed the shopping session which ensured that the experience was still fresh in the participant's mind. All the interviews were guided by a set of predetermined open-ended questions and all the conversations were tape-recorded. The intention of this qualitative investigation was to understand the shopping experience as its participants feel or perceive them therefore; the following interview guide was developed to help me initiate discussions.

Interview guide

In this study, each open-ended question was intended to gain a deeper understanding of the informant's impressions and feelings of their shopping experience. Patton (2002) advocates

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that truly open-ended questions "does not presuppose which dimension of feeling or thought will be salient for the interviewee" (p. 354). Patton notes that truly open-ended question allows interviewees to select from among their full repertoire of possible responses. The interviews in this study were guided by the following questions:

1. I began each interview with the opening question: "When I say shopping, what comes to mind?"

2. Were you looking for anything in particular on today's shopping trip?

3. Is shopping important to you? Why or why not?

4. Tell me about today's shopping trip. Tell me about some of the high points. Were there low points? What were they?

5. How do you think your experience today affected you?

6. Would you consider shopping as a tool to represent your self or your idea of self?

7. Would you consider shopping as tool for socializing?

8. Could you describe for me an ideal shopping trip?

Depending on the informant's answers, I used my own discretion on whether to probe further into certain areas or to continue the interview process. Following the initial question, I directed the informants' attention o the photographs they took during their shopping session.

The informants were asked:

1. To talk about each photograph as they would if they were to tell a friend about their visit to the mall;

2. to pick out the most representative photograph of their shopping session;

3. to arrange the photographs in themes and to give names to these different themes;

4. if there were things that they had not been able to photograph but which had made an impression (that is, something important but they had found it difficult to take pictures of it).

Concluding questions:

1. Is there such thing as a typical/good shopping trip? If so, was today a typical shopping experience for you?

2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how leisure-like was today's shopping experience?

Indeed, Patton (2002) advocates that the goal of qualitative interviewing is trying to determine what dimensions, themes, and images/words people use among themselves to describe their feelings, thoughts, and experiences. To achieve this goal, I referred to a set of questions and statements designed to probe more specifically into areas that were not answered in the initial question. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) note that probing is used when the interviewer feels that something is left out or that the informant might say something more about an issue if encouraged in some way. The probing questions and statements used in this study appear as follows:

- How did you feel about _____?
- How did that make you feel?
- What did you think of _____?
- What was _____ like?
- What do/did you mean by _____?
- That's interesting, tell me more about _____.

- What else?

- Could you please describe/elaborate more on _____?

- Tell me about something that stands out in your mind about today's experience?

- Is it (the shopping experience) different with other people?

DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) note that, "researchers should be aware of the techniques of interviewing and be able to use those that are the least directive" and intrusive (p. 125). The most fundamental technique that the authors suggest is "active listening" which is first and foremost, listening. DeWalt and DeWalt explain that the interviewer is trying to gain information in the terms used by participants and in a progression of thought that is natural to them. Active listening, however, is also "active", meaning that the researcher is also actively aware of the conversation.

DeWalt and DeWalt also promote the notion of "sensitive silence". The authors explain that "the researcher is engaged in a conversation in which she/he is not saying anything but shows attentiveness to the interaction through body language and eye contact" (p. 126). DeWalt and DeWalt further suggest that the interviewer assumes a position in the most intimate level of closeness that is appropriate to the expectations of personal space in the culture, the particular setting of the interaction, the degree to which the researcher knows the informants, and the gender of the informants. To avoid the informant feeling as if the researcher is not listening, DeWalt and DeWalt suggest the use of neural verbal prompts such as, "really?" and "yes?" (p. 129-130).

Another nondirective way of providing feedback to informants that also facilitates further discussion and clarification is the use of "repetition feedback" (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002, p. 130). According to the authors, repetition feedback involves the researcher repeating the last

word or phrase uttered by the informant, and hence the interviewer may use the phrase in a questioning inflection. DeWalt and DeWalt note that by repeating words and phrases, the interviewer is encouraging the informant to continue with their response and description.

Similar to repetition feedback is the technique of "summary feedback" (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002, p. 131). In this technique, the authors explain that the interviewer summarizes the last set of statements articulated by the informant. "Again, the goal is to let the informant know that the researcher has heard what was said, and to encourage the informant to continue and expand on the comments" (p. 131). Researchers may also use summary feedback as a self-check on their understanding of the informants' experiences since the feedback invites the informant to clarify any misconceptions. The last bit of advice offered by DeWalt and DeWalt involves how to conclude an interview. DeWalt and DeWalt note the importance of the researcher letting the informants know how much she enjoyed talking with them and how much she enjoyed their time together.

Indeed, the interviewing techniques suggested by the literature were useful tools in this study. At the end of each interview, the informant was told that I may contact her for additional clarification on the data as well as to give her a copy of their interview so they can validate the accuracy of my recordings and subsequent interpretations.

Data Analysis

"Grounded theory coding generates the bones of your analysis" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 45). Charmaz advocates that coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain what the data means. The author explains that grounded theory coding consists of two main phases: 1) an initial phase involving naming each word, line, or

segment of data followed by 2) a focused, selective phase that uses the most significant or

frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large batches of data.

Initial coding

During initial coding, a grounded theorist's goal is to remain open to all possible

theoretical directions found within the data (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz suggests that researchers

conducting initial coding ask themselves the following questions:

> What is the nature of the data?
> What does [*sic*] the data suggest?
> Whose point of view does [*sic*] the data represent?
> What theoretical categories can be established from the data? (p. 47; see also
> Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

She also notes the importance of "staying close to the data" when coding and "starting from the

words and actions" of the informants. In this study, following the initial reading of the

interviews I coded each interview by highlighting relevant words or phrases and making

comments in the form of codes to the side of the document. After coding all interviews, over 30

codes were extrapolated.

Focused coding

Focused coding is the second major phase in grounded theory coding (Charmaz, 2006).

This process utilizes the most significant and/or frequent codes to sift through large amounts of

data.

During focused coding, I made decisions about which of the initial codes were most

relevant and also made the most analytic sense to categorize into possible themes. All the codes

were reviewed and redundancies eliminated. This was followed by the organization of similar

codes into categories. The final step in the focused coding was to generate the main shopping

themes that are most representative of the participants' shopping experiences. This was done by rearranging the categories to show the relationships between them. The codes which did not become main themes were best-fitted as a sub-theme or as properties of a theme. The name of each theme represents the overall idea of its respective codes. During this coding phase, I also attached supporting quotes (collected by the interviews) to each of the main themes. In addition, I engaged in what Charmaz (2006) calls *theoretical sorting* (p. 115), whereby I sorted, compared and integrated any relevant memos into the emerging theory. This step helped to refine theoretical links and comparisons between themes.

Memo-writing

Memo-writing constitutes a crucial component in grounded theory study and typically begins with initial coding (Charmaz, 2006). Strauss and Corbin (1998) propose that memos are important documents because they record the progress, thoughts, feelings, and directions of the research and the researcher's interpretation of the data. Charmaz (2006) states that

> Putting things on paper makes the work concrete and manageable…memos give you space and place for making comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes of data and other codes, codes and category, and category and concept and for articulating conjectures about these comparisons. (p. 72-73)

She also notes that memos should be spontaneous and written using informal, unofficial language for the researcher's personal use.

For this study, memo-writing allowed me to reflect on my own reactions to any new ideas and insights which arose from the words and actions of the participants. I wrote memos throughout the data analysis and this helped to delineate how the emerging categories were related before framing them into a theoretical description.

Theory presentation

Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that the presentation of a grounded theory can be a narrative description that illustrates the interrelated concepts of the studied phenomenon. The tightly written narrative description is typically followed by a thorough explanation of the supporting categories, conditions, and relationships. Strauss and Corbin stress the importance of using informants' quotes throughout the narrative description in order to validate how the substantive theory is grounded in the data.

Chapter 4 of this thesis will provide a detailed analysis of the interviews and the emergent themes on the shopping experience. The final chapter is comprised of a narrative description of the shopping experience as expressed by the participants but as interpreted through the researcher's lens.

Strategies for Validating the Accuracy of Findings

In qualitative research, validity is seen as an accurate representation of the findings from the standpoint of the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2003). To ensure internal validity, this study used *method triangulation* which entailed comparing and integrating data generated by different data collection methods (Patton, 2002, p. 556). The data in this study were collected through three methods: participant observation (shopping with consumer), interviews, and photo-elicitation.

Creswell (2003) suggests that validity is also enhanced by the use of member-checks to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings. In this study, the emergent themes were shown to the informants giving them the opportunity to determine the accuracy in my interpretations. The participants' photographs also provided a type of member-checking and increased the credibility of my interpretations (Heisley & Levy, 1991). In addition, the

photographs provide tangible and very rich data which "speaks to the truth" of the research (Harper, 2002, p. 432).

Ethical Issues

Consistent with research policies here at UW, I developed an informed consent form for participants to sign before they engaged in the study. This form acknowledged that the participants agreed to be accompanied by me while they engaged in a shopping trip at a mall of their choosing. It also acknowledged that the participants' rights were protected during data collection, the participants' was given the right to withdraw from the study at any time, the participants' were fully informed regarding the purpose and procedures of the study, and that the participants' have the right of access to research findings (Creswell, 2003).

The notion of intrusiveness of photographing in public spaces was also considered (Keller, Fleury, Perez, Ainsworth, & Vaughn, 2008). Taking photographs in a public space can be embarrassing for respondents (if the presence of a camera draws unwanted attention), and the act of taking pictures of other customers and employees can be offensive to some (Pullman & Robson, 2007). For these reasons, the shoppers in this study were instructed to refrain from taking pictures other people, including their shopping companion, mall employees, and store employees.

To protect the confidentiality of all recorded material and photographs, appropriate safeguards were taken to ensure that this material is stored in accordance with ethical policies and procedures. In order to protect participants' anonymity and to keep their responses confidential, I allowed the participants to choose a pseudonym for themselves.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter presents the findings from my participant observation, five in-depth interviews and photographs taken by the participants. Before presenting the findings, a description of the participants will be provided. In interpreting the data, the emergent themes will help the reader better understand the context of the recreational shoppers' lived shopping experiences and reflections.

Description of the Shopping Participants

All five participants are self- proclaimed recreational shoppers who enjoy shopping and actively choose to partake in the activity during their free time. The participants are all female between the ages of 26 to 30. None of the participants had familial shopping responsibilities at the time of the study. All five women live in Toronto, Ontario where the shopping trips took place. One participant is a full-time graduate student, another works full-time in the marketing field, and the remaining three participants work full-time in the medical field. Three of the participants (Jill, Skyler, and Alexis) are friends of mine and the other two participants are friends/shopping companions of Alexis. The amount of time spent engaged in shopping pursuits varied among the five shoppers. Generally, though, it was reported as a frequent, if not a daily, activity.

In reporting the findings, each participant will be referred to by a pseudonym, which they chose at the end of their interview. The research questions laid out in Chapter One were used as a guideline for reporting the findings. The emergent themes provide an account of how participants experience the shopping activities as well as the retail environment in which they took place.

Emergent Themes on the Shopping Experience

The following themes and respective subthemes emerged from this study:

1) Seeking Experiences

    a) Searching for Opportunities

    b) Searching for Positive Social Contact

    c) Searching for Self

    d) Aspirational Shopping

2) Challenges to Shopping

    a) Mission Shopping

    b) Guilty Pleasure

Seeking Experiences

One of the key themes illustrated by the five interviews is the notion that shopping is an activity of seeking and searching. Often times, the 'seeking' dimension of shopping experiences involves the shopper browsing and wandering through a mall without a purpose, while at the same time imagining how particular articles of clothing might look on her. For the participants, the pleasures of shopping are gained through the freedom of "just looking". Although the initial motive behind their recreational shopping trip is not to buy anything, the shoppers in this study seem to anticipate the satisfactions which may result from an unexpected acquisition. The shoppers also seek out positive social aspects of shopping, as well as the possibility that shopping allows them to manage their personal style and representation of self.

Seeking Experiences is a broad theme that speaks to the idea that participants are seeking to fulfill particular needs by partaking in the shopping activity. These needs encompass the

subthemes of *Searching for Opportunities*, *Searching for Positive Social Contact*, *Searching for Self*, and *Aspirational Shopping*.

Searching for opportunities

The participants in this study all report that recreational shopping provides opportunities for satisfaction, spontaneity, feelings of mastery and accomplishment, and feelings of escape. These positive dimensions are often related to the shopping process which may include the experience of acquisition. The participants appear most satisfied when the purchase is "unexpected" and/or is a "good deal". Enjoyable experiences of acquisition can also be associated with gift-purchases.

> When asked to reflect on her shopping trip, Jill stated that,

> I had a great experience because I found an item that I wanted and I wasn't really planning on looking for it and buying it but I just happened to see and then the fact that it was on sale was even better, so that's actually pretty exciting. It was unexpected so it was a good surprise. I also didn't expect to buy something for someone else as a gift. So, I like to do that and give things to people that I think they'll like. Uhh, I didn't really buy anything for myself besides the brie baker but that's more of a practical thing for my house and not like clothing or anything that I don't really need, not that I really need it but I'm glad I have it, I'm excited to use it today! (Laughs)

For Jill, there was additional element of surprise when she bought a gift for her friend and she elaborated on how this unexpected purchase made her feel, "It's hard to decide a size for someone else but it's fun and I like it! And then thinking about how the person will react when I give them something, it makes me feel good."

When asked to describe sources of her shopping enjoyment, Alexis explained that shopping is about "browsing for things and like potentially buying things." She also enjoys the opportunity for "bargain hunting" and finding something "that's usually pretty expensive and it's like a really good sale." For Alexis, recreational shopping is not about "having many goals in

mind"; rather "it's more just like browsing and buying things when it is a good deal." When

asked about how she feels when she finds a "really good deal", Alexis stated that,

> It makes me feel like, like, it makes me feel like, I don't know, I don't know how
> to describe it…I don't know, I guess it makes me feel like pretty awesome to like
> get something that's normally pretty expensive but for like a really good price like
> it makes me feel pretty awesome. (Laughs)

For Alexis, the experience of acquisition is satisfying both at the moment of purchase as well as

after the purchase. She explained that,

> It's like satisfying…it's like kind of exciting cuz I'm like buying something new
> so I guess I can use the word exciting. So ya like, I feel like, it's not like a high,
> that's not the right word but it's like it feels pretty exciting and then like I'm like
> excited to go home and try it on again or like excited to show someone and talk
> more about it especially when it's something that I really like but to tell you the
> truth, I buy things like that I don't necessary need, I just buy it cuz like it's on
> sale. So that's another motivating factor for me, it's like sales, even though I
> don't need it and I've never looked at that before but if it's on sale then I'll look at
> it and I might consider buying it.

Alexis also added that the experience of acquisition provides an almost "euphoric" feeling and in

her anticipation of owning something new, she becomes "really excited about it and it's really

thrilling to buy." She does note that the "thrill of shopping or purchasing" can be really short-

lived and although she might not explicitly be seeking out that feeling, it is still an experience

she enjoys.

Tara described that her ideal shopping trip "would be where I'm not necessary looking

for anything particular" but,

> I'll find something that I could use or that I could give as a gift that I think is
> really unique, at a good price, and…ya, unique stuff at a good price that I think is
> usable. I think that would be an ideal shopping trip. So I find something that I
> think is a really good find and I haven't overspent.

She also offered the following as an example of how she feels about finding a good deal,

> I bought this dress for 7 bucks and I was really, really happy. I didn't need it but
> it was 7 bucks! So that kind of thing is like an ideal shopping trip. And you can

use it and it's a super deal. That's when I don't feel bad about it after the fact. Or when it's a super deal and it's for someone else or when it's for someone else.

Enthusiastically, Tara further elaborated on her experiences of acquisition. For her, it is a type of "high",

> I guess it's just the potential high that it gives me. Like looking for stuff, like new stuff that I don't have and like actually getting it and even the process of like before I get it, just like going around and looking. But I think it's probably the actual purchase, like I get really excited when I'm actually purchasing something. I have a problem, (haha) I totally do! I'm not lying. I think I do feel kind of high though like I feel like I shouldn't do it now because I do it so often but I want to. It's like giving into this craving. It's so bad, we're addicted, we're shop-a-holics! It just makes me feel good, you can't explain it… At the time when I'm buying it, I feel pretty good, kind of like…I think it's such a drug! No, it is! It's like I feel like this excitement, bringing it up to the front and paying for it and be like, 'Oh ya, now it's mine!' (Laughs)

Tara happened to make a purchase during her shopping trip with me and commented on her feelings about it

> Well today, I was looking for something specific so even though it was pretty fun, like we saw some pretty cool umbrellas and like I can almost see umbrellas becoming my new thing. Anyway, it was pretty fun but I was still looking for something specific so I felt like by the end of this shopping trip, I need to have purchased my umbrella whereas if I was just looking just for the sake of looking, I would not feel that little bit of pressure or actually like make a decision to buy something. I think it was pretty fun cuz I enjoyed like the looking and the trying out and stuff. Like shopping is always really relaxing even if I don't buy anything. (Laughs)
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> I guess it's not always about the purchase because I'm also kind of satisfied when I feel like I've looked through like my usual stores or whatever's interesting at that moment and I haven't spent anything. Then I feel like, 'Okay, I've tried, I've checked it out and there's nothing that I like so good I'm leaving now before it's too late.' I guess there's another part of it, like being with what's new and improved in different stores whether or not you like it and are going to buy it. When I've made my rounds to the stores that I like or that my friend told me is having a sale and I still haven't found anything, then I can leave satisfied because I've checked it out like the places that potentially have something but they just ended up not having anything for me at that time. And then I'm really happy.

Tara's comments illustrates that even her utilitarian task of having to buy an umbrella can be an enjoyable experience, particularly since she shared the experience with a friend. However, she

does seem to imply that shopping is most recreational for her when there is no means to end.

When asked describe how she feels after making a purchase, Tara explained that

> Ya, and like the actual purchase, like I said, I'm getting more and more happy with it so this is always a good sign, like when you buy something and you're not totally, totally sure but than after a while you're like, 'You know what? It is really cool. You know what? No one else has this umbrella! You know what? Like blah, blah, blah' and you think of all these other reasons so that's always a good sign. I think there's no real low points cuz I actually needed this thing, like I actually needed an umbrella and I didn't buy the 80 dollar umbrella so I'm happy.

Jolene was also asked to talk about her ideal shopping experience and to illustrate what

kinds of opportunities she is looking for. She stated that

> A typical good thing would be like I'm going for no reason and I find things that you know, I really like, that I find are a good deal, that's the main thing, you know? I would shop for no reason like say, if my friend, she went and told me about this deal and I really don't need it but if it's a really good deal, I'll go buy it, like I'll go look.

If she made a purchase during any of her spontaneous trip to the mall, Jolene described it as

"more than satisfaction." She further elaborated that

> Ya like, 'Holy, I look so good!' (Laughs) I don't normally try it on again when I get home but I'll want to wear it soon. I guess it just makes me feel good, like you have something new to wear and then you just look different, and I guess like everybody likes a compliment and when people see it, they notice. If they see you day in and day out and then they notice, 'Oh, it's so nice' and I enjoy telling people that it's deal…I was happy. You just feel like, 'Oh, I'm so grown up now.' (Laughs) You know you do feel a sense of accomplishment, like it is my own money that's buying it, it's not like my parents support you or whatever. So, it's a nice feeling that you can afford it, I guess like when you bought it and you know, you sort of justify it as well, 'Oh you deserve it, you worked hard, like blah, blah, blah.' That kind of thing comes to mind as well.

Jolene also commented on how she feels when she encounters an item that is being advertised as

"the last one left" and she impulsively decides to buy it,

> I'm trying to describe that feeling…let me think…okay, because I feel like, 'It must be a hot item so then if I buy it, I'll have the last one!' I think that will be an immense satisfaction! (Laughs) It's better if it's on sale but if it were the last one,

I would be more inclined to buy it regular price. If I really like it then I would probably buy it.

For Jolene, shopping might be about the opportunities for immediate hedonic pleasure and perhaps feeling rewarded and accomplished when she makes a shopping discovery.

Also in support of the idea that shopping can stimulate positive feelings and a sense accomplishment, Skyler illustrated that

I like shopping when I'm not looking for anything, it's relaxing. And then I'm kind of happy when I don't find anything when I go shopping because then I don't spend money but I still go for the experience of going shopping. I'm happy like if I find something I really like, I kind of hope in the change room sometimes that it won't fit me, does that make sense? Well, like I know that if it fits me nice I'm gonna think about that item all day and come back and buy it so I'm gonna buy it if I like it…I like the challenge of finding nice things at a good deal and dressing well for a good price and nobody knows except for me. I shop looking for that one random good deal.

Across all five shopping interviews, there is also a trend of 'feelings of escape'. Shoppers reported that feelings of escape are related to the "therapeutic" properties of shopping as well as a perceived sense of control while engaged in the activity. In connection to both escape and a perceived sense of control are feelings of familiarity and comfort with the shopping environment.

As Alexis explained, shopping is a "pastime" and

It's something that you don't have to pay to do, I mean, if you want to spend money, you can but you don't necessarily have to so it's kind of a free activity you can do with your friends…It can be a passive, mindless activity that allows you to take your mind off reality for a short period of time and just focus on something else.

She further commented on how she prefers shopping alone when she has "had a long day at work" and she is "sick and tired of dealing with people." She illustrated the therapeutic nature of shopping by saying

I just want to be alone so then I shop alone and when I'm walking around, like it's nice cuz I don't have to pay attention to anything around me, like I'm just by

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myself, in my own world…Oh, like sometimes like, I don't know, like when you're stressed out at work, you've had a long day, you've had to deal with like all these issues and like there's so much going through your mind, it's almost nice to just go to the mall, like it's a mindless activity…It's really mindless, like you don't have to think about much like, it's very reactive like you look at a shirt you're like "oh this is nice" and that's all you really think about, like you don't really think about much. So like it's very good for just clearing your mind of all the thoughts that you've had during the day. People, I guess like relax in different ways, some people go home and read a book and they find that relaxing, some people watch TV, they find that relaxing, but all that stuff is really like mindless activities that try to like remove you from the situation that was stressing you out. So like for me, maybe it is just like removing myself from that environment that's why maybe I like to go shopping at lunch, I like to get out to a mall at lunch at least so that I remove myself from the environment and then like going back makes it a little bit more tolerable.

For Alexis, shopping also allows her to be in her "own zone" and to control how much time she wants to spend in a store and she can "go into any store" that she wants to without feeling sensitive to other people's agenda.

Tara shared similar insights on the therapeutic potential of shopping and when she thinks about shopping, her thoughts immediately jump to "fun" and "relaxation" because for her, shopping is what she enjoys to do the most when she is stressed out. She also mentioned that shopping offers her an escape from boredom and fills in the time when she has nothing else to do. When asked if she considers shopping important to her, Tara stated that

Yes. I think it's important to me because I really honestly do feel kind of relaxed when I do it. I think it calms me down somehow and so, it's like therapeutic. It's kind of what I do to relax, like some people go to a spa, I shop! So when I am stressed out, it's so easy for me to shop like I don't have to buy a spa package and all that stuff which is also relaxing but like it's a little less convenient.

So ya, it's important to have that outlet for me and I think too I shop in certain places so there's a familiarity with like the mall or the stores that I go to and I kind of like that feeling and I don't have to do it any particular way so ya, I can kind of do what I want, I don't have to buy anything if I don't want to.

When asked to describe her feelings related to shopping or what goes through her mind while shopping, Tara explained that

I'm not really thinking. This is my relaxing time so I don't have to think so I don't. I just like walk around and look at stuff that's like interesting to me and I'm really not thinking that much to tell you the truth. I guess it feels like a little bit of a getaway like it kind of takes you away from the stuff that you have to do. So, just like the relax mood that you can be in, like strolling, you don't have to you know, like move from one store to the next in a certain amount of time. I think I only really start thinking when I'm looking at the price and now that I have to be a little more picky about the stuff that I'm buying because I don't really need to be buying more stuff. I start thinking about like where I can wear this or when I can use this, you know, or like, can I give this as gift and who would like this stuff? So it's more like just unimportant things really.

In addition, she talked about shopping as a means to "get away from the workplace cuz it's like a change of scenery." She further elaborated on how much she dislikes commuting home from work so she will often "take a break" from the commute and "just shop around the mall just to see what's new."

Jolene simply responded with, "I'm bored" when asked for a reason for going to the mall. Similarly, Jill said that shopping can be her escape from boredom and she has even considered it as "retail therapy." She explained that,

I have actually used it as, retail therapy, I know it's cliché to say but there's often times when I'm in a bad mood or something's happened in my life to put me down and I'll think, a new top would be nice to go out in or some new shoes would be fun, or something like that to lift my spirits.

Jill further added that she often goes to the mall if she is "just killing time" or "maybe just going and sitting in the food court getting something to eat and having a drink to make me relax again."

Skyler considers shopping as her opportunity for "recreation" and recalled how she spent a lot of time shopping with her mom while growing up. She explained that "it was the only thing we ever did cuz we use to live across the street from one so we just went all the time and it's homey, I feel comfortable, it's like therapeutic." Skyler further added that

When we [Skyler and her friends] were like in school like what we had no driver's license so we'd walk to the mall and be like mall rats there. So it's just, it's a comforting thing I guess. Ya, and also I work and a lot of the times I have

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to wear scrubs and work stuff so it's nice to go and like get out of the oven and find stuff that I like.

For Skyler, it appears that the familiarity of the retail environment is attractive when she wants to escape from boredom and she often visits a mall when she no other plans.

Skyler jokingly added that "I have no other interests; I'm a boring person. I just go to the mall!" When asked to elaborate more on why she enjoys going to the mall so much, Skyler explained that

> Because I have nothing to do! (Laughs) At least I get visual stimulation, I get to walk, I can go with friends, it's somewhere indoors especially in the winter when it's cold, it's cuz we have nothing to do. I just like going to the mall. It's homey, it's a safe place and a lot of the stores are familiar cuz when you find Guess here, it is the same as the Guess at another mall and the Bay is going to be the Bay at another mall so you have familiarity almost no matter which mall you go to and no matter what city you're in like when I was in Windsor on the weekend, I was at a mall and I felt at home but I didn't know the city at all but was okay, all these stores, I know them. And also like some people, they like going to the casinos and stuff to go gambling for recreation, right? I'd rather go to a mall; at least I know I'm guaranteed a return instead of giving my money to the slot machine where I'm probably going to lose, here at least I know I'm going to get something back for my going. So for me, I'd rather do this than like go to a casino or go gamble or go to a racetrack which some of my friends like to do.

Skyler's comments suggest that shopping can indeed be an important leisure activity for escapism and socializing. When asked if she would be able to live without shopping, Skyler laughed and said,

> I'm sure I can live. I'm a practical person. I know that shopping is not everything but I enjoy it and I'd be sad if I couldn't and I'd be bored on a lot of nights. It's an enjoyable pastime for me and I find it therapeutic and it gets me out of the house and it's good for procrastination, ya, it procrastinates me from like doing schoolwork or from what I have to do.

Arguably, shopping does present opportunities for leisure dimensions such as satisfaction, spontaneity, mastery and accomplishment, escapism, familiarity and a perceived sense of

control. Throughout the interviews, it is also evident positive social contact plays an important role in the shoppers' retail experience.

Searching for positive social contact

Positive social contact refers to the participants' interactions with friends and family as either a) shopping companions and/or b) recipients of purchases made during the shopping trip. The shoppers in this study prefer shopping companions who share similar shopping interests and a similar style in clothing. In regards to 'recipient' interactions, the participants often purchase gifts and present them to their friends and/or family with the hope of positive reactions. This theme also considers the possible interactions between the participants and retail salespeople as well as other shoppers in the retail environment.

The social aspect of shopping held the largest appeal for one particular shopper in this study.   Jolene was shopping with a companion on the day of the shopping study and noted that it was "definitely a plus" and "high point" of her trip. She further explained that

> I would prefer to shop with a friend. It really depends like in terms of the goals, like just shopping for no reason really; usually I like to shop with a friend. It's really fun! (Laughs) So it's not just about shopping, it's like a catching up, you know and having someone to give you input and stop you from making rash decisions or to push you to make rash decisions as well. (Laughs) Cuz you're not just shopping by yourself you have someone to talk to and you know like, it's the social part of it, to have someone to talk to and like, especially with busy schedules like you sort of hit two birds with one stone, you get to get stuff and see your friends. A lot of times, it's when I haven't seen my friend in a while then I would ask them, 'Oh let's go shopping!' It's more spontaneous. It's more like the day-of, like 'What are you doing today? Do you want to go?' So that's like something we can do together and most of my friends like to do that.

Jolene's preference for social connectedness while shopping is further illustrated in her following comment,

> I do like to go with someone; I don't usually like to go myself. Even if I go myself, I would call someone, 'Oh, I'm here in the change room, blah, blah, blah,

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where are you? I'm not even calling them to come, it's just to tell them I'm there trying on something and I'll describe it and ask 'Should I buy it?' You know that kind of thing. There's definitely a social aspect to it, it's not just for the sake of buying something necessarily and if it's a big purchase or expensive, I'll definitely call someone. I don't usually like to shop with guys, like my boyfriend cuz he has no input or he'll be like, 'Oh, it's ok' and I'm like, 'So is it nice?', 'It's ok', everything is okay!

During Jolene's shopping trip with me, she mentioned that she was on the lookout for a birthday gift for a good friend. Jolene knows that the person she is thinking of "likes certain things but she'll never feel right about spending so much on herself…but she's very generous for other people." With this in mind, Jolene thought that it would be nice to get her friend "something that would really like but would never buy." Jolene clearly values her friendships and notes that she enjoys buying gifts because it can bring happiness to both people.

Although Jill typically prefers to shop alone, she still likes to keep in touch with her friends while she is at the mall. Her social interactions are demonstrated by the text messages she sends and receives via her cell phone. When asked to explain why she stays in touch with her friends using text messages, Jill stated that,

I'll see things in stores that remind me of places I've been or people I know. Like I saw hair extensions in a store that made me remember one of my friends wants some red extensions for her Halloween costume so I immediately thought of her and I went to see if they had the right colour but they didn't, but I still texted her to let her know that this store has them so she might try a different location. It makes me feel useful. I like my friends to know that I'm thinking about them so I'll be texting during my shopping trips usually if I'm alone so I'm still connected with my friends and thinking of them while I'm out.

For Alexis, the most enjoyable shopping excursions are shared with a shopping companion who has "the same concept of shopping" as herself. In the following comment, Alexis explained the difference in the social experience depending on who she is shopping with,

So if I say for example, if I'm shopping with Jolene, like we kind of have like the same concept of shopping, we never get mad at each other if we spend longer in like one store, like if I have to try 16 things on and she'll try nothing on, she

doesn't care right? We just have that understanding, so like, with her we can spend like hours in one store if we wanted to. We might shop for a lot longer cuz like we're chatting at the same time we're shopping and like we'll browse a lot more. It's more of a social activity. But say if I'm with my boyfriend, like I know he hates shopping, like shopping is the bane of his existence and he will sit on a bench and wait for me outside, so like when I shop with him I know like, I have to be quick so I run in, I'll look quickly, if I don't like something, I run out, you know like that type of thing.

She further elaborated that the "best shopping ever" would be when "I'm with people that want to shop and are intending to shop and they're not rushing me."

Similarly, Tara enjoys shopping with a friend who also values socializing and sharing a good retail experience. She noted "shopping with people" is a great way to spend time "just talking about non-shopping stuff." For Tara, shopping is a common interest that she shares with her friends so it makes fun and easy to do together. When asked to explain why she enjoys shopping with friends, Tara said that,

It's fun cuz I get to see like, we see each other faces and things or like talk about like whatever's cool in the stores and whatever's new and like if there's like birthday parties and stuff to shop for, like events to shop for, like what kind of things we can buy people, so ya, I guess it's a way to see eye to eye or like together.

She also talked about her enjoyment of her shopping trip that was being studied. Tara felt that the trip was "exciting" because "we were all there, you know like getting excited about the same thing and trying it out and just being silly looking girls! (Laughs)" In discussing the leisure qualities of shopping, Tara made note of the social aspects of the experience. She described that,

I think even though I do often shop by myself, I like being where there are other people around and it's still kind of social even though it's independent, do you know what I mean? Even though you're not necessarily interacting with all of them, you see that there are other people around so I like knowing that. I like hearing the music; I like the whole thing about shopping.

Skyler also discussed the importance of shopping as "a good pastime" and "social outing." She further elaborated on the "social outing" aspect of her shopping trips by saying,

> I go with friends or I meet friends for coffee or we'll go for dinner at a mall and like after dinner we can walk around or we'll go to a movie after and just being able to talk to your friends. And sometimes, depending on the occasion, trying things on together can be a good bonding and fun experience.

Skyler noted that she values the time she spend with her shopping friends because they "have things in common" with her. The shared interest in shopping makes the experience enjoyable for both shoppers as they "share tips" and "opinions" on products that they both like.

For all the participants, shopping also provides possibilities for both positive and negative interactions with retail salespeople. It is not surprising that positive interactions are preferred and the participants noted that shopping is more enjoyable when the salespeople are personable, but not too aggressive and even if help is not required, the salespeople are expected to be attentive to the shoppers' needs and respond accordingly.

When asked to reflect on her encounters with retail salespeople during her studied shopping trip, Jill stated that

> Most of the sales staff in the stores were friendly so that always puts a positive spin on things. It's kind of discouraging when you have rude salespeople or people that just don't enjoy doing their jobs and they're not having a good day so you don't have a good experience with them especially since I've worked in retail so I know what it's like on the other side of the counter. You have to be nice to everyone whether they deserve it or not and no matter what your mood is, but especially when I'm being the customer and I'm just asking for help and I'm not trying to be rude or anything, I expect them to treat me with kindness and respect.

To better illustrate the idea that the participants prefer positive social contact with retail salespeople, many of the comments below will highlight the negative interactions they wish to avoid. For example, when waiting in line to pay for an item, Alexis said to me, "so slow, like the other day I was buying something and the cashier was chit-chatting with her friend who was buying something and she was fully chatting for like five minutes and the line was building up, I

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was like so pissed off." When asked to describe a more desirable shopping experience, Alexis

immediately brought up her expectations of retail salespeople,

> One where the sales people don't bother me like not too often…it depends, they shouldn't bother you unless they see you're carrying a lot of things, which is nice, it's helpful if they offer to put into the fitting groom and stuff but there's other stores that are way more aggressive like you just walk in and they're like "Hi! Can I help you?" But I haven't even had time to look around yet. Like honestly, too aggressive of sales people, it's annoying, cuz if you just want to like look around and like browse before, if I need help, I'll ask you for help.

Similarly, Tara shared her experience with retail salespeople that failed to meet her

expectations,

> Well I was shopping yesterday, of course, and I kind of wanted to try on these shirts and there was no one to help me and I actually needed someone to get into a fitting room and I really didn't have time so I just wanted to go in, try it on and make up my mind if I was going to buy something and go but there was no one to help so I left and that was kind of irritating.

Jolene prefers shopping in retail environments that "aren't too empty because then the

salespeople are in your face." Her shopping experience becomes less enjoyable if she "feels

bothered" by aggressive salespeople or by "too many people" in the store. When asked about

her feelings toward inattentive salespeople, Jolene said that

> I don't like that either. I don't mind if I don't need anything but I don't like to have to really ask for it [help] either like when I need them. I want them to come but I don't want them in my face either.

Comparably, Skyler declared that "I hate when the salespeople bug me, I don't like it

when they talk to me." When asked to explain her negative feelings toward the staff, Skyler said

> I don't know, I feel like there's pressure to buy stuff and I don't like that or I feel like they're looking at you thinking, 'Oh you're like younger, you're not going to buy anything.' Like they won't take you seriously and then they won't treat you well, kind of like the whole, what's that movie with Julia Roberts? Pretty Woman! It's like she goes and they don't take her seriously.

The shoppers in this study typically did not let their unfavourable experiences with retail salespeople affect their overall impression of their shopping trip. Many of the informants were recalling previous negative experiences and such encounters do not occur on every trip to the mall. Furthermore, the shoppers mentioned that even if they are feeling irritated, they often "forgot about it" if they are "with a friend," and/or if they "find something they like" and/or they "find a good deal."

Throughout the interviews, it is apparent that shoppers seek out more than just favourable retail experiences that are influenced by acquisition, shopping companions, and retail staff. As indicated in the next section, participants also have an inclination to use shopping as a means of developing their "self" and representing their "self" to society.

Searching for self

For the participants, shopping offers them the opportunity to explore, to evaluate, and to acquire items that will be used as an illustration of their self. Shopping for clothes, in particular, is readily apparent in the informants' comments because it a means of self-expression and it is central to their lifestyle. The shoppers also elaborated on the positive emotions (i.e. feeling good, satisfaction, self-reward) associated with shopping for clothes and accessories. In addition, the informants commented on how society might influence one to shop and possibly affect how one portrays themselves in social settings.

Alexis explained how she identifies with shopping by saying,

I feel like looking good for yourself boosts your confidence. Like, I don't dress nicely just to impress other people around, like I don't really care what other people think of me or think of my image but I want to look good for myself so I feel like shopping helps me to achieve that goal. It's also satisfying to like, when you're working so hard like at a job and you make money, it's satisfying to sort of like treat yourself sort of thing.

When asked if shopping plays a role in her representation of self, Alexis noted that the activity is an important part of her lifestyle. She further elaborated that,

> When I buy work clothes, I want to represent myself in a professional way at work so like I buy clothes that are appropriate for that setting. So ya, I do think looking professional will make your colleagues respect you more and it will make the people that you're working with or like your patients respect you more too. I think it's important to like dress appropriately at work so like I think you do shop to represent yourself. For me, clothing shopping at least helps to build your image, like an image that you portray to others and an image that you conceive of yourself. The way you conceive yourself I guess is dependent on how you present yourself and I think if you didn't have shopping then you wouldn't be able to build your sense of style and I don't know how you would represent yourself. In the same way like shopping for other things, like home accessories and stuff, then you're like building a sense of style in your home and when people come over they see that that is a representation of you. Your house is reflection of yourself and your sense of style too, so like from that perspective I do think that you do use shopping to represent yourself cuz without shopping you can't like buy those things, right?

Similarly, Jill noted that "the things that I buy when I'm shopping would represent who I am, whether it's for me or a gift for someone, I put thought into it." She also commented on her habit of "weighing the pros and cons" of each item and that thought-process is "what makes me who I am." For the clothing that Jill buys, she stated that "they obviously represent my style and what I like to wear."

From Skyler's perspective, shopping is about developing a personal sense of style and "when you're shopping, you immediately go towards what represents you, and you buy items that represent you." Skyler noted that while shopping, she occasionally tries to be creative and "buy something different but in the end," she prefers to stay true to her own style. Moreover, Skyler considers shopping an "exercise" and it motivates her to keep a healthy lifestyle and a healthy body weight because "when you look good and you dress nice, it makes you feel more confident about yourself and then people see you when you're more confident and they take you more seriously and they like spending time with you."

When asked how she identifies with shopping, Jolene explained that when she is browsing the stores, she is "immediately" drawn towards items that she felt represented the way she wished to present herself. She also noted that her enjoyment of shopping comes from buying "things that me look good." Jolene further illustrated that,

> I do want to show to other people what I like and what I care about and what I think looks good. A sense of style, like I wouldn't say that's the most important thing, I mean if ultimately one day I couldn't buy certain things for whatever reason, I would be able to cut it out, but in terms of right now, I would say what I purchase does sort of show the person that I am and what I like. Cuz there's different styles and I guess it's part of human nature especially with females to want to make ourselves as attractive as possible and to be in a sense, look different cuz you don't want to be the same and be boring, right? So, I think it's partially instinctive that you're always trying to reinvent yourself in some way and I think it's fun. It's just fun to do that.

Jolene further commented on the association between social expectations, social settings and people's use of shopping,

> I think everybody wants to change. Well, we do want to look different. You don't want to be boring, always the same kind of thing. Maybe partially cuz you want to attract the opposite sex, I don't know, it could be that, right? And I guess you always want to improve yourself and maybe like you know trying different brands and eventually it seems like you're going for more and more expensive things, so part of it is prestige. You know like you're growing up and you can afford things that are more expensive and I guess partially you want other people to see you in a certain way, a certain image. I guess in certain settings, like with my good four friends, I don't think it really matters to me but I guess you have different kinds of friends, you have social friends and then you have work people. You want people to respect you. There's a certain expectation. I guess in your eyes, you think that they expect you to be a certain way so I think that has a factor in terms of what you buy. And when you're shopping, you're trying to achieve a certain image. But with work and with friends, it's different. But even with friends, you have certain friends that are closer to you than others and I think if they know the real you, I don't think it matters as much, but unfortunately I think the way society is, it's just that you sometimes want to impress people that you don't necessarily like, which is kind of dumb but I think it's true. I read that in a paper somewhere and I was like, 'Oh it's so true.' Cuz they'll judge you for it. It makes you think like why are you buying all these things? Is it really to make yourself happy or others or to make others jealous of you or whatever? But I don't want to be like that, but partially that does make an impact on what you buy.

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Tara noted that she considers shopping "as an identifier" of her self and although she feels a bit "embarrassed" by her personal label, Tara views the activity "as a bit of a girly thing" and that "to some extent, it's not bad." She explained that,

> Not all girls shop but a lot of girls do shop and so you know, I guess it makes me feel ok. Like maybe if I was a guy who wasn't proud of their shopping habits, not that I'm particularly proud of mine, but maybe if I was more embarrassed about the fact that I love shopping than maybe I really wouldn't want to use it as a means of identification. (Laughs) But I guess cuz it's so accepted that girls in general shop, to some extent, it's not bad. Plus, like you know, I'm working, I don't think I'm going overboard although I probably am, but I think it can identify me to some extent because I do it so often. And like it's difficult I think to be a girl and to live in a big city like Toronto, like right downtown where you're always inundated with ads and stores and people wearing cool things and fashions always changing. I think it would be difficult to not shop for clothing but also for like stuff in general, like it's everywhere! I feel like you always want to look around at the newest thing.

Arguably, shopping provides the opportunity to manage one's unique style and self-image. For the informants, shopping is considered an important part of their leisure and lifestyle and they regard the activity as more than just acquisition. Rather, shopping is an "experience" with meaningful intentions and desirable outcomes.

Clearly a recreational trip to the mall may entail leaving with or without making a purchase. However, it becomes evident in the following section that participants often leave the mall with something on their mind, a lasting impression of the objects they admire and desire.

Aspirational shopping

During their shopping trips with me, participants were asked to photograph anything that made an impression on them. *Aspirational Shopping* is the prevailing theme that resulted through examining those photos. The photos typically reflect articles of fashion that the participants plan on buying or would like to buy. At the time the photos were taken, the participants would express their desire for the item, but it was often "too expensive" and they

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could not justify spending the money on it. Through the photos, shopping is reflected as an activity involving dreaming, fantasizing, and enjoying the state of expectation and/or anticipation. For example, Alexis took a picture of a dress (see Figure 1) that she "really likes" and has been "eyeing" every time she goes to the mall, but because the price is not "ideal," she has yet to purchase it. She talked about how good it would feel to one day own the dress and imagines how it might look on her.

Figure 1. Alexis' sought-after dress. Perhaps she will buy this dress one day, but only when the price is right.

Similarly, Tara took a photograph of an expensive umbrella (see Figure 2) that she really liked but it was too costly to justify its purchase.

Figure 2. The frills and fanciness of this umbrella caught Tara's eye but the price had her looking for something more affordable.

Dreaming and fantasizing are also reflected in Jolene's explanation of why she took a picture of a lady's pair of heels (see Figure 3); she had laughed and said,

> It's good to have like things to dream about, like I would never buy it for that price, three hundred and ninety-eight dollars. I like it, like I like the style, it's timely, and it would last a long time. But I couldn't afford it.

Figure 3. Jolene found the "perfect" style of heels but at an "imperfect" price.

Jolene also took a picture of a pair of boots (see Figure 4) that she would like to purchase as a

birthday gift for her friend. She explained that it would make her feel happy to give a gift like

that to her friend and looks forward to the day she will make the gift-purchase. Jill also

photographed her gift idea (see Figure 5) for a friend and happily noted that she enjoys picturing

how the gift will be used and how happy her friend will be when presented with the gift.

Figure 4. Jolene's photo of the pair of boots she would like to buy for her friend's birthday.

Figure 5. Jill's gift idea, "I think he'll like it!"

An additional finding of note is that Skyler's photographs reflect a more personal aspiration. Her photographs of store mannequins and a poster (see Figure 6) reflect her motivation to keep a healthy image of her body. She noted that "shopping for pretty clothes gives me motivation to be good, to eat well, and to work out."

Figure 6. Skyler explained, "…if a guy that hot could wear those clothes, I should be wearing those clothes too!"

While *Aspirational Shopping* stood out as the prominent theme among the photos taken, two shoppers did take pictures of store displays and new merchandise which they found interesting and pleasing to the eye. Such photographs speak to the idea that retail settings and atmospherics do have the potential to leave an impression on shoppers' mind.

Indeed, the participants find shopping to be an enjoyable and satisfying activity; the retail experience however, does involve a few challenges which go beyond finding the perfect item at a perfect price.

Challenges to Shopping

Challenges to Shopping is the second broad theme and speaks to the frustrations that

shoppers might face while engaged in the activity. This theme encompasses the sub-themes of

Mission Shopping, and *Guilty Pleasure*.

Mission shopping

Mission Shopping refers to the utilitarian aspects of shopping which makes shopping less

recreational and less enjoyable. The participants in this study explained that shopping becomes a

"mission" when the goal is to find something specific and to leave the mall with having

purchased that item. Skyler elaborated that,

> It's not as relaxing and if you don't find what it is that you're looking for, it frustrates you or if you find something that's out of your price range and it's what you were looking for then you will have that item on your mind the whole time while you're trying to find something cheaper. It's just frustrating.

Similarly, Alexis explained that if she is "really determined" to find an item she "really

likes", she "will drive far away to get it" and "it's very frustrating" for her if she does not find

the item. She also commented on the pressure of last-minute gift shopping,

> Actually, I don't like shopping when I know its last minute and I need to buy a present for someone. I hate that kind of pressure cuz I need to look for something, I need to buy something today and like I can't find it. It's usually those times when it's toughest for me to find something cuz like with pressure it doesn't help. Then I end up picking up random things and buying something that I don't want to buy for someone.

When asked to explain how she feels about browsing the mall with a purpose in mind,

Tara said,

> If I'm looking for something specific and I can't find it, that's always frustrating. The gift-giving too, like if have something specific in mind and I can't find anything or I end up trying to be too creative.
> So, when I'm shopping for something specific like I was today and I don't find it then I'll be kind of upset or disappointed. Anyway, it was still pretty fun

but I was still looking for something specific so I felt by the end of this shopping trip, I need to have purchased my umbrella whereas if I was just looking for the sake of looking, I would not feel that little bit of pressure or actually like make a decision and buy something.

Consequently, shopping appears to be most leisure-like when there is no "time schedule" and "nothing in particular to find." In leisure terms, this suggests the importance of relative freedom. For the shopper who needs to find something in particular, she tends to spend as little time as possible "looking around" because she just wants to "go in and get out" quickly. Although the shoppers in this study did not make clear distinctions between utilitarian shopping and recreational shopping, it appears that leisure dimensions can be present in both types of shopping experiences. Mission shopping has the potential to provide satisfaction and feelings of accomplishment, particularly if the shoppers find what they are looking for.

Guilty pleasure

Guilty Pleasure is another theme associated with the experience of acquisition. Throughout the interviews, the shopping participants would often admit that a feeling of guilt is sometimes intertwined with their feelings of satisfaction and self-reward, especially after a purchase is made. When speaking about how much they enjoyed shopping, I felt that the informants tried to downgrade their love for the activity by making jokes about having "shopping problem." For example, Tara stated that "shopping is always a really positive experience" and then went on to comment about her "gigantic problem." The shopper explained that,

> Because it [shopping] can make us poor and like really it is kind of a selfish thing. Like I guess once in a while or even if you shop all the time and you just like to window-shop, I don't think it's bad. But I think when you're always buying stuff like I am, for myself usually, it's so often that there's nothing that I need anymore. So, it's kind of selfish and embarrassing, like you have a bit of guilt or a lot of guilt. That's why I see it as a bad thing, it's like you don't really deserve all this stuff.

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Similarly, Alexis explained that a purchase might make you feel good initially but if the after-purchase thought is that the item is too expensive then feelings of regret, doubt and guilt set in. When asked if such negative feelings deter her from shopping, Alexis laughed and said "only for a short period of time."

It appears that guilty pleasure is typically associated with shoppers buying things for themselves. Gifts are viewed as a justified purchase and the participants willingly spend more money on their friends than on themselves. Whether shopping leads to feelings of guilty pleasure or just simply pleasure, the shoppers in this study generally look forward to the activity and enjoy their time at the mall.

Summary

The two main themes and their respective subthemes described in this chapter captured the many factors that comprise a shopping experience. The shoppers discussed both positive and negative aspects that could influence their retail pursuits including the emotional outcomes of the experience. The first main theme *Seeking Experiences* highlighted the idea that shoppers are seeking to fulfill particular needs by participating in the shopping activity. *Seeking Experiences* is further elaborated by the subtheme of *Searching for Opportunities* which suggested that 'experiences of acquisitions' yields many positive outcomes such as satisfaction, spontaneity, feelings of mastery and accomplishment, and even feelings of escapism. The second subtheme *Searching for Positive Social Contact* emphasized the dynamics of social interactions between shoppers and their shopping companion(s), their friends, gift-recipients, and retail salespeople. Third, the subtheme of *Searching for Self* described the importance of shopping in a person's development and management of their self. The photographs taken by the participants captured

the last subtheme of *Aspirational Shopping*. These photographs illustrated the participants'

numerous objects of desire.

The second main theme of *Challenges to Shopping* discussed some of the frustrations that

shoppers might experience with shopping. This theme encompassed the first challenge *Mission*

Shopping, which suggested that shopping with a goal in mind is less enjoyable and may cause

frustration for a shopper who cannot find what she is looking for. The second challenge *Guilty*

Pleasure demonstrated that feelings of satisfaction and reward stemming from shopping

purchases could be intertwined with feelings of guilt and regret. The following chapter will

bridge together all the themes as a theoretical discussion of the recreational shopping experience.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

In recent years, the business literature has paid considerable attention to the topic of recreational shopping (Bäckström, 2006). Research has demonstrated that recreational shopping can possess leisure characteristics and can impact the way people feel about themselves, including the way they engage and think about stimuli in the shopping environment. Despite shopping's popularity as a leisure activity and its apparent significance in many people's lives, it is interesting that leisure researchers have devoted so little attention to examining the leisure potential of recreational shopping (Jackson, 1991). Using an inductive, grounded theory approach, this study examined the emotional responses to shopping experiences, the personal meanings assigned to the activity, and the leisure qualities of five subjective accounts of shopping. The goal of this research is to provide a substantive description of the experience of shopping as leisure from the perspective of the participants, but as interpreted through the researcher's lens.

This discussion chapter will begin by reflecting on the themes already presented and how they relate to each other, and to the research questions of the study. The discussion will also illustrate the extent to which the findings of this current study support previous research on leisure and shopping. In addition, the significance and limitations of the current study will be discussed, along with suggestions for future research.

Responding to the Research Questions

Before further discussion of the themes, it is important to review the research questions that guided this shopping study. As presented in Chapter One, this study was intended to answer the following questions:

1) What characterizes a recreational shopping experience?

   a) What specific leisure dimensions (*e.g.* freedom, intrinsic satisfaction, pleasure, etc.) can be identified during a recreational shopping experience?

   b) How do the participants describe an ideal shopping *experience*?

   c) How do the participants describe an ideal shopping *setting*? (*e.g.* novelty, variety, other shoppers, etc.)

2) What conditions influence the recreational shopping experience?

   a) Do recreational shoppers consider settings and atmospherics to be important to their shopping experience?

   b) Are there conditions which make a recreational shopping experience more or less enjoyable than a utilitarian trip?

3) What meanings do recreational shoppers assign to recreational shopping?

   a) What motivations do participants report for their shopping behaviours?

   b) Do the participants define themselves through shopping behaviour? (*e.g.* exploring sense of self; acting out roles and exploring different roles; etc.)

   c) Does recreational shopping play an important social role in the participants' lives? If so, how so?

4) What are the outcomes of the recreational shopping experience?

a) What psychological outcomes (*e.g.* sense of competence, growth, and accomplishment; positive mood enhancement; etc.) accrue from the participants' shopping experience?

b) Do the participants have defined expectations in terms of outcomes and/or benefits when they go shopping?

c) How do the participants describe the outcomes and/or benefits of their shopping experience?

The themes that were generated from the analysis of the interviews help to illuminate certain aspects of the above questions. For example, while considering the first research question, participants revealed that several leisure dimensions such as satisfaction, spontaneity, mastery and accomplishment, and escape are often characteristics of their recreational shopping experiences. In addition, their ideal shopping experiences have neither time constraints nor pressure to find and purchase particular items. The participants agreed that an ideal shopping mall was one characterized by familiarity so that they know they can find retailers who offer their preferred style of clothing.

In terms of the second research question, it was discovered that shopping experiences are more enjoyable when influenced by positive social interactions between shoppers and their shopping companions, retail salespeople and gift recipients. Conditions that could diminish the degree of shopping enjoyment include negligent salespeople and shopping companions who do not share a similar shopping interest. It was also found that the retail setting and atmospherics played a role in shaping the shopping experience. For example, discovering new fashion trends and being visually stimulated by retail designs are considered by the participants as "fun" elements of shopping.

Findings addressing the third research question suggest that shoppers are motivated by the social and "therapeutic" nature of the shopping activity. For instance, the participants often escape from boredom and/or stress by going to the mall. In addition, shoppers acknowledge the use of shopping as a tool for managing their self image and agree that their shopping behaviour can be used to identify and reflect their lifestyle.

While addressing the fourth research question, the findings indicated that psychological benefits derived from shopping activities include a sense of accomplishment and self-reward. An interesting outcome of shopping may be the feelings of 'guilty pleasure' associated with purchases. It appears that the immediate hedonic sensation from the actual purchase can be later replaced by feelings of doubt and/or regret, particularly if the item is a self-gift. The guilty pleasure, however, was addressed in a humorous manner by all participants and the feeling is not a significant deterrent from the activity. Furthermore, although a typical outcome of a shopping trip might be buying a new item, participants in this study emphasized that such an acquisition is not their only source of shopping pleasure. Rather, pleasure can also result from simply browsing the mall and enjoying the sensory stimulation offered by a retail environment without making a purchase.

Shopping Themes and Shopping Schemes: In Pursuit of Leisure at the Mall

Bridging the themes

The themes that emerged from this study reflect the experiential nature of shopping within a retail environment. All of the participants expressed a genuine interest in shopping and emphasized several leisure appeals of the activity. As a result of the analysis of the interviews, the main theme of *Seeking Experiences* suggests that shoppers have a desire to fulfill particular needs when they go shopping. Indeed, leisure researchers have proposed that the satisfaction

which participants expect to gain from their engagement in a leisure activity is linked to the motivational forces of 'seeking and escaping' (Iso-Ahola, 1982). Iso-Ahola suggests that individuals perceive an activity as a potential satisfaction-producer for two primary reasons: it provides intrinsic rewards, and it helps free them from a routine environment. The 'seeking and escaping' dimension is also reflected in the subthemes of *Searching for Opportunities*, *Searching for Positive Social Contact*, *Searching for Self*, and *Aspirational Shopping*.

Arguably, the activity of shopping has the potential to provide numerous intrinsic rewards. During their shopping trips, the shopping participants experienced feelings of satisfaction, spontaneity, comfort, familiarity, mastery, and accomplishment. Research on recreational shopping suggests such intrinsic rewards parallel the concept of hedonic shopping value. From a business perspective, hedonic shopping value is "more subjective and personal than its utilitarian counterpart and results in more fun and playfulness than from task completion" (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994, p. 646). Moreover, the authors suggest that hedonic shopping value reflects shopping's potential emotional and entertainment potential. Shopping joy may also be associated with hunting for the best bargains including purchasing prestige merchandise at reduced prices (Byoungho & Sternquist, 2004). Further, price savings also cause hedonic responses because the bargain may be a source of pride, excitement, increased sensory involvement and accomplishment (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994).

This study's findings demonstrate that both intrinsic rewards and hedonic value are related to the shopping process (i.e. browsing the retail environment, receiving new information about new products, finding good deals) including the experience of acquisition. The participants talked about the freedom of "just looking", the excitement of searching for and finding an unexpected bargain, and even the "thrill" of purchasing; although the emphasis was

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placed on the fact that shopping is most enjoyable when there was no predetermined goal to make a purchase. In fact, the participants said that they are often happier when they did not buy anything. They were content with knowing that they had the opportunity to wander freely through the mall and browsing all their usual stores.

In support of the idea that acquisition is not central to a shopper's retail enjoyment is the theme of *Aspirational Shopping* which is reflected by the participants' photographs. This theme not only illustrates the shoppers' 'objects to admire and desire' but also their sense of fantasy and imagination that occurs while shopping. Although the shopper may never own the object in the photograph, Babin, Darden and Griffin (1994) propose that such "vicarious consumption can provide hedonic value by allowing a consumer to enjoy a product's benefits without purchasing it" (p. 646).

Research in shopping behaviour typically argues that people shop for either hedonic or utilitarian reasons, but it is important to acknowledge that both orientations might be present as elements of a single trip (Bäckström, 2006). Although the theme *Mission Shopping* indicates a utilitarian nature and is described by the participants as less enjoyable and more frustrating than its hedonic counterpart; the shoppers still acknowledged the possibility for interplay between task and fun. For the participants, mission shopping has the potential to provide feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment particularly if the mission is accomplished.

Bäckström argues that even if a consumer is on a recreational shopping trip with the primary purpose of receiving enjoyment from the activity, it is possible that she or he (as part of the activities performed to achieve this enjoyment) also would come to engage in utilitarian behaviour. For instance, gift-shopping may be regarded as an obligatory task (Fischer & Arnold, 1990) but for the shoppers in this study, gift-shopping is often a significant component of their

recreational shopping trips. Additionally, the participants found this task to be rewarding and they looked forward to the gift-recipient's reaction upon receiving the present. Fischer and Arnold further emphasize that the gifts given reflect and reinforce familial and social relationships. This may help explain the positive response these shoppers reported to activities devoted to the purchase of gifts.

Social aspects of shopping are considered in the subtheme of *Searching for Positive Social Contact*. Leisure researchers have proposed that the seeking dimension includes interpersonal satisfactions gained through social interaction and connectedness (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). For the participants, shopping provides opportunities to socialize with friends, to be in a space with other people/shoppers, and to interact with retail salespeople. Certainly, social interaction is usually one of the most frequently reported reasons for engaging in leisure and it also often associated with satisfaction (Auld & Case, 1997). For many consumers, shopping is both a leisure and social event constructed through active participation in creating and sustaining the interactions. The participants in this study demonstrated that interactions are created and sustained by the "opinions" and "input" shared between them and their shopping companion(s) while at the mall. Indeed, leisure researchers argue that friends rely on one another for exchange and feedback in interpreting everyday events (Younnis, 1994). Both exchange and feedback are vital to a social context because "once the interaction starts to provide feedback to the person's skills, it usually begins to be intrinsically rewarding" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991, p. 68).

In conjunction with the social stimulation that shoppers seek while in a retail environment, consumers may also be *Searching for Self* while shopping. Shopping for clothes and/or learning about new fashion trends are common behaviours for all five of the participants

and both actions help them to explore, to evaluate, and to manage their self image. For these participants, shopping was about developing a personal sense of style and using fashion to represent themselves in a socially acceptable way (i.e. looking professional at work, looking trendy to their friends). The participants further elaborated that shopping is an important part of their lifestyle and satisfying outcomes of the activity include a perceived improvement of their self image and feeling confident with the self they present to the world.

Certainly, leisure researchers have noted the symbolic meaning and value of an activity's potential for the presentation and/or exploration of a person's identity. The symbolic portrayal of the self is an integral part of both leisure and shopping, allowing people the opportunity to try out new identities for fun and fantasy (Dimanche & Samdahl, 1994; Lehoten & Mäenpää, 1997). Dimanche and Samdahl also proposed that an important component of experiential consumption is the tendency for a shopping enthusiast to seek opportunities to enhance their self-identity and self-concept. In this study, the participants illustrated that shopping is an essential tool for developing their wardrobe as a channel for self expression. More importantly, the findings in this study reflect Glaser's (1994) argument that "the primary aim in shopping expeditions is not to purchase but to perceive and to reaffirm a satisfactory identity" (p. 57).

It is necessary to acknowledge that shopping experiences are considerably influenced not only by the consumers, but also by the retail environment. Previous research has proposed that the leisure activity's setting and its attributes can either facilitate or hinder not only the activity experience but the satisfactions derived as well (McCool, Stankey, & Clark, 1985). The shoppers in this study take comfort in knowing that shopping malls are familiar places where they can experience novelty and satisfaction through the constantly changing displays and new merchandise that compliments their personal style (Bloch, Ridgway, & Nelson, 1991; Westbrook

& Black, 1985). The participants also acknowledged that shopping is a cognitive stimulus as they often process new information and ideas about staying trendy and fashionable.

This study's findings also appear supportive of the concepts of 'place dependence' and 'place identity' (Kyle, Bricker, Graefe, & Wickham, 2004). According to the authors, place dependence reflects the importance of a resource for providing the amenities necessary for desired leisure activities. Evidently, the participants view the shopping mall as a functional place that offers a collection of attributes which permit the successful pursuit of their beloved shopping behaviours such as browsing and discovering bargains. Kyle and his colleagues describe 'place identity' as the cognitive connection between the self and the physical leisure environment. In this sense, the shopping mall offers consumers the opportunity to construct, express, and affirm their self identity. Such behaviours were readily apparent in the participants' discussion of their shopping experiences and have been addressed in the theme *Searching for Self*.

Additionally, it has been suggested that people come to recreation sites with expectations and desires for specific types of satisfaction (McCool, Stankey, & Clark, 1985). Perhaps one of the most significant expectations among these shoppers is the belief that the shopping mall is their place of escape and/or relaxation. The retail world provides the participants a change of scenery from their home or workplace. When shopping for fun, the participants generally perceive the shopping mall as a stress-free environment with the potential to provide satisfactory leisure experiences. Furthermore, they often go to the mall with the desire to overcome boredom, to avoid obligatory tasks, and/or to take their mind off reality for a short period of time and focus on something else.

Arguably, researchers have suggested that leisure participation is motivated by a person's need for a diversion from the routine of daily life (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997; Tauber, 1972).

Mannell and Kleiber suggested that by escaping the everyday environment, a person can leave behind personal and/or interpersonal worlds. Similarly, Lehoten and Mäenpää (1997) observed that the pleasure found in shopping comes from being freed from duties and leisurely spending time in a place that is away from the spheres of home and work. Moreover, the authors stated that pleasurable shopping is considered a journey in a space where one has the possibility of acquisition and the openness of day-dreaming and the planning of future purchases. Falk (1997) also concluded that the shopping mall is the ideal place in which the shopper has complete freedom to create their ideal recreational shopping experience.

Consequently, it appears that the most leisure-like shopping experiences interplay both expectation and anticipation. As illustrated by the key theme of *Seeking Experiences* and the related subthemes, shoppers visit a shopping mall in search of something particular and with the expectations of fulfilling personal desires. While wandering within the retail environment, the consumer may experience openness to endless possibilities. Indeed, for many shoppers the most enjoyable moments were those in which they made surprising discoveries. They were particularly delighted, for example, when they found a prestige item being sold at a great price. Such discoveries often resulted in immediate gratification, satisfaction as well as a sense of accomplishment. A significant source of excitement and thrill also arises prior to the discovery and purchase because the shoppers enjoy the challenge of the hunt. In this state of mind, Lehoten and Mäenpää (1997) concluded that "if waiting without promise of redemption can feel good, then in a lot of shopping the pleasure comes from enjoying the state of expectation itself" (p. 158).

The pleasurable aspects of the shopping activity also include encountering the self and the others while at the shopping mall. In particular, shopping for clothes allows consumers to

explore their personal style and to manage the self image that they wish to portray in the social world. Shopping can also be about imagining oneself in a new way and testing new identities, while being simultaneously comforted by the fact that one's preferred image does not really change. The shopping experience is also significantly influenced by positive encounters with shopping companion(s), the recipient(s) of gifts purchased by the shopper, or with the retail salespeople. Lastly, the shopping mall provides consumers with an ideal setting to experience the feeling of freedom while simultaneously sharing the fact of "being present together", where the shopper is open to the possibilities of pleasant and meaningful reciprocal communication (Lehoten & Mäenpää, p. 156).

Evidently, these shoppers describe shopping as a meaningful and enjoyable leisure activity. However, it appears that the acquisitional aspect of shopping can sometimes lead to feelings of *Guilty Pleasure*. Guilty pleasure is typically associated with shoppers buying things for themselves and feeling like they "don't really deserve them". The shoppers even exhibited nervousness and embarrassment about their love for shopping and for admitting that shopping is a central part of their lifestyle. Indeed, researchers have critiqued shopping's consumptive nature and suggested that consumers are falling victim to the relentless appeal of consumerism as well as the insistent pressure to keep up with consumer trends (Schor, 1998; Scitovsky, 1992). Similarly, Hemingway (1996) argues that shopping is often required to conform within society and thus, its leisure potential to emancipate has been "deformed" (p. 28). While it is important for any study of shopping to acknowledge negative aspects (or potential costs) of the activity such as compulsive buying (see O' Guinn & Faber, 2006) and materialism (see Chang & Arkin, 2002), it is suggested here that any critique on shopping should also acknowledge that the activity can be a "distinctive form of experience, one with its own peculiar activities, pleasures

and satisfactions, rather than being treated as simply a means to an end" (Hewer & Campbell, 1997, p. 187). By exploring both the consumptive and experiential aspects of shopping, a more comprehensive understanding of the activity will be gained.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study provide insight into the complexity of both the shopping activity and the experiences of the actors taking part. More importantly, they illustrate the leisure potential of shopping.   Results suggest that shopping is considered by recreational shoppers to be a freely chosen leisure activity with many meaningful and satisfactory outcomes. In addition, this study illustrates the role of shopping malls as a leisure setting offering a collection of attributes which permit the pursuit of various shopping behaviours. Finally, this study contributes to the existing research on recreational shopping and encourages further studies into shopping's multi-faceted features. Each of the themes presented in this study illuminates the nature of shopping experiences including the recreational and leisure qualities as identified by the participants.

The themes explored here are all connected to the key idea that shoppers are motivated by their desires, expectations and anticipations when they partake in the recreational shopping activity. Shopping represents numerous opportunities which provide immediate hedonic benefits as well as intrinsic rewards. Such opportunities often include the 'before and after' phases of experiences of acquisition and unexpected discoveries, the positive interactions which occur both inside and outside a retail environment, and lastly, the individual's use of shopping as a means of self-expression and a tool to manage their self image. The leisure dimensions demonstrated by the shopping themes include satisfaction, spontaneity, familiarity, mastery, accomplishment, and escapism.

Strengths and Limitations

The use of a grounded theory approach was of great value to this study because I was able to capture the thoughts and perspectives of shopping enthusiasts. It is unlikely such insights could have been adequately acquired from more quantitative methodologies. The use of the three methods of data collection (participant observation, photo-elicitation, and interviews) worked very well because it allowed me to discover more about the lived experiences of shopping. The photographs taken by the participants while they were shopping are tangible examples of their experience at the mall. Moreover, the photos were useful in generating discussions during the interviews. The use of face-to-face interviews allowed me to examine more closely how each shopper experiences shopping and I was able to probe deeper into specific areas of interest that arose during the shopping conversations and the interview.

As a qualitative researcher, it was important to strengthen my credibility by constantly examining my own thoughts and responses to the data. Through the use of 'memoing' during the analysis of the data, I was able to remain reflexive while interpreting the participants' thoughts, feelings, and perspectives on their shopping behaviour. To further establish credibility, I used member checks and encouraged participants to critique my analysis, thus ensuring all relevant information was captured and preventing any misinterpretation of their shopping experiences.

While this study does have its strengths, it is also necessary to acknowledge its limitations, so that they may be addressed in future research on this topic. Although it was not the intent of this study, the interpretive nature of grounded theory research means that the findings established here cannot be generalized to represent all shoppers. As the goal was to learn more about recreational shopping, the participant criterion was limited to individuals who

were self-proclaimed recreational shoppers. In addition, the sample consisted of only five

individuals, which may have limited the diversity of shopping experiences. The sample

addressed female shoppers between the ages of 25 to 30 with no familial shopping

responsibilities. It did not include male shoppers, shoppers of different marital status, shoppers

who have familial/household shopping responsibilities, or any other persons who may have very

different shopping experiences and values compared to the present sample.

Although this study answered various questions about the experiential nature of

recreational shopping, there are still many complexities left to explore and new questions to be

answered. The following section provides ideas for further investigation.

Future Research Directions

There remains considerable opportunity for leisure researchers to delve further into the

complexities of shopping. Among these are opportunities for more qualitative research with

female shoppers who come from different types of families, socio-economic status, racial and

cultural backgrounds. In addition, since all of the participants in this study were female, this

study could be extended to males. Men's experiences of shopping may differ greatly from those

of women and it is important to understand both perspectives. Furthermore, although it was not

emphasized by all five participants, two of the shoppers did relate their love for shopping to the

fact that they are female. Consequently, it is worthwhile to look more deeply into the

perspectives of both genders and the meanings they assign to shopping.

Although a traditional shopping mall was used in this study to analyze shopping activities

and experiences, future studies might consider the leisure potential of other shopping arenas such

as outlet centres, department/big box stores, outdoor markets, boutique/specialty stores, and

street-style shopping. Furthermore, the growth of online shopping has also generated

considerable interest among academic researchers (see Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004). It would

be advantageous to explore whether these different shopping settings satisfy and/or support the

leisure needs of consumers in order to gain a deeper understanding of the recreational shopping

experience.

This study found that photo-elicitation was a useful attempt to capturing the shoppers'

perceptions through interpretations of the photographs taken by them. In light of this, it will be

useful for future qualitative studies to include the photo-elicitation method, and hence generate a

more tangible description of the relationships between shopping and leisure.

Another issue worthy of further investigation is the relationship between body image and

shopping activities and behaviours. Frederick and Shaw (1995) proposed that body image

concerns (e.g. weight, appearance) may well affect leisure behaviour in a variety of ways;

perhaps constraining participation in some activities or affecting the enjoyment of particular

leisure situations. While body image was not a significant concern among the majority of this

study's participants, it did appear as an influential factor in one informant's shopping experience.

Given that shopping, particularly clothes shopping, is related to how people present themselves

in society, it seems reasonable to further investigate how body image might play a role in the

shopping phenomenon.

Hutchison and Samdahl (2000) argue that people are attracted to the idea that leisure can

be used to resist dominant cultural ideologies and social norms The authors further proposed

that while people might perceive themselves as resisting ideologies and norms, they might

actually be simultaneously conforming to them through their leisure pursuits. This study

suggested that shoppers often desire to maintain a 'unique and personal style' but at the same

time, their 'unique and personal style' needs to fit in with social expectations and social settings.

Given that shopping is proposed as a significant leisure activity, it would be worthwhile to investigate the extent to which shoppers perceive themselves as resisting cultural ideologies and social norms as well as the extent to which they believe that shopping allows their true self to emerge (see Hutchinson & Samdahl, 2000; Samdahl, 1988).

Overall, the intention of this study's research questions was to examine: (1) the characteristics of a recreational shopping experience, (2) the conditions which influence a recreational shopping experience, (3) the meanings assigned to recreational shopping, and (4) the outcomes of a recreational shopping experience. While the findings of this study did address each of the four areas, future studies might consider each area as an individual research topic, therefore resulting in more detailed descriptions of the circumstances that surround a given shopping situation.

Although this study took a qualitative approach, the participants were asked at the end of their interview to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 how leisure-like was their trip to the mall. Surprisingly, the answers varied from 7 to 9, with none rated at 10. It appears that while the shoppers went to the mall with the intent to just browse and have fun, their answers to the question reflected a covert mission to either "look for a gift" or, "look for a deal" or, "look for a particular item". In light of this finding, additional research is required to better understand the overlap between recreational and utilitarian shopping practices and future researchers should not shy away from combining both qualitative and quantitative methods into one study. According to Bäckström (2006), a more extensive investigation of the shopping activity may lead to a more profound knowledge of recreational shopping from the perspective of unique subjects, and hence of the many-sidedness of the activity and its practitioners.

Reflections from the Researcher's Lens

      Having spent countless Sunday afternoons wandering through shopping malls with my mom, this study was motivated by my own personal love for shopping and desire to understand more about the activity's engaging nature. Through the shopping trips and interviews as well as the shopping themes, I not only learned more about my own shopping behaviour but also how the experience can be personally significant and meaningful for fellow shopping enthusiasts. Through the process of completing this study, I have become a lot more critical about customer service at retail stores and more analytical about people's shopping behaviour at the mall. I find myself questioning everything about consumer behaviour and in a way, shopping has evolved from just a simple leisure pursuit to an event integrated with work-like elements. Regardless of the work-like elements however, shopping remains as a preferred leisure pastime that I share with both my mom and my friends and every trip to the mall adds an extra little something to an otherwise ordinary day.

Concluding Thoughts

      This study provided an in-depth look into the lived shopping experiences of five self-proclaimed recreational shoppers. It helped to illuminate some of the leisure characteristics, hedonic shopping values, intrinsic rewards, and meanings that are associated with both the process and the outcomes of recreational shopping experiences. The findings also described the role of shopping malls as a leisure space and as facilitators of enjoyable shopping activities. Furthermore, this study demonstrated that shopping should not only be researched in terms of just 'recreational shopping' or 'utilitarian shopping'. Rather, the findings indicate considerable overlap between the two types of shopping and further research is needed to more fully understand the complexities of the activity.

In addition, it was previously mentioned that the vast majority of studies on recreational shopping and its leisure potential have appeared in the business literature. The business literature has presented numerous studies featuring many leisure concepts and ideas, but it is surprising that leisure researchers have devoted so little attention to the activity. Consequently, I challenge those who question whether or not 'shopping is fun' or 'shopping is work' to look more closely at the 'fun' elements and recognize that for many people, the activity is indeed a profound leisure experience.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Telephone Script

P = Potential Participant;   I = Interviewer

I - May I please speak to [name of potential participant]?

P - Hello, [name of potential participant] speaking. How may I help you?

I - My name is Juliana Fung and I am a Masters student in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Ron McCarville on shopping as a leisure experience. As part of my thesis research, I am conducting participant observation (shopping with consumers) and face-to-face interviews with individuals who are self-proclaimed recreational shoppers to discover their perspectives on shopping experiences.

   I would like to speak with you about your perspectives on shopping experiences. Is this a convenient time to give you further information about the participant observation and interviews?

P - No, could you call back later (agree on a more convenient time to call person back).

OR

P - Yes, could you provide me with some more information regarding the interviews you will be conducting?

I – Certainly, (provide the following background information):
   I will be undertaking participant observations (shopping with consumers) interviews starting in October, 2009. The researcher-accompanied shopping trip will last about 2 hours and the subsequent interview will last about one hour and will occur immediately following the shopping experience. Participants will be asked to carry around a digital camera and to photograph 'anything' that leaves an impression on them, i.e. store décor, advertisements, etc. Involvement in this shopping study is entirely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study. The questions are quite general (for example, could you describe and ideal shopping trip?).
   You may decline to answer any of the interview questions you do not wish to answer and may terminate the interview at any time. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis.
   All information you provide will be considered confidential. The data collected will be kept in a secure location and disposed of in 7 years time.
   If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please feel free to contact Ron McCarville at 519-

888-4567, Ext. 33048. I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours.   Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

     After all of the data have been analyzed, you will receive an executive summary of the research results. With your permission, I would like to mail/fax you an information letter which has all of these details along with contact names and numbers on it to help assist you in making a decision about your participation in this study.

P - No thank you.

OR

P - Sure (get contact information from potential participant i.e., mailing address/fax number).

I - Thank you very much for your time. May I call you in 2 or 3 days to see if you are interested in being interviewed? Once again, if you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at 000-000-0000.

P - Good-bye.

I - Good-bye.

Appendix B: Information Letter and Consent Form for Participants

[Department letterhead]

Information & Consent Form for Participant

Date: *Insert date of study*

Title of Project: *An Exploration of the Shopping Experience: A Grounded Theory Approach*

Faculty Supervisor: *Ron McCarville, Recreation and Leisure Studies, 519-888-4567 ext 33048, mcarvill@healthy.uwaterloo.ca*

Student Investigator: *Juliana Fung, Recreation and Leisure Studies, jkfung@uwaterloo.ca*

Study Overview

I am a Master's student in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Ronald McCarville.

You are invited to participate in a study assessing the leisure potential of a recreational shopping experience. Past research has demonstrated that shopping experiences can possess leisure-like characteristics and can impact the way someone feels about themselves and the way they engage and think about stimuli in the shopping environment and vice versa. This study will extend previous research by looking more closely at the personal meanings and subjective experiences of shopping, going beyond the practical functions to explore the leisure-like aspects of recreational shopping and the influences of the retail environment on individuals engaged in the activity.

What You Will Be Asked to Do

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to invite the researcher in joining you on a shopping trip at a time convenient to you and at a shopping mall selected by you. You will be asked to shop for at least 2 hours and during this time, the researcher will remain as an unobtrusive observer. You will also be provided with a digital camera and be asked to take photographs of 'anything' within the shopping mall that makes an impression on you (i.e. store décor, merchandise, etc.). If there is 'something' that you wish to photograph but you do not feel comfortable doing so, please let the researcher know and she will make a note of it. During the shopping phase of this study, the researcher will be recording notes and in some instances verbatim comments.

Following the shopping phase, you will be asked to complete a face-to-face interview with the researcher. You will be asked a series of open-ended questions which are intended to gain a deeper understanding of your impressions and feelings of that day's shopping experience. You will also be asked to talk about each photograph that you took as if you were telling a friend about your visit to the shopping mall.

Participation and Remuneration

Participation in this study is voluntary, and will take approximately 3 hours of your time. In appreciation of your time, you will receive a $20.00 gift certificate which is redeemable at any of the Fairview Cadillac Shopping Malls.

You may decline to answer any questions presented during the study if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time by advising the researcher.

Personal Benefits of the Study

The benefits of participation in this study include learning about research in Recreation and Leisure Studies in general and the topic of this study in particular. Upon completion of the study, you will receive a summary of the study results. There are no other personal benefits to participation.

Risks to Participation in the Study

There are no known or anticipated risks to participating in this study.

Confidentiality

All information you provide is considered completely confidential; indeed, your name will not be included or in any other way associated, with the data (researcher's observation notes, photos, audio-recordings, and interview transcripts) collected in the study. Furthermore, you will not be identified individually in any way in any written reports of this research. The data (researcher's observation notes, photos, audio-recordings, and interview transcripts), with identifying information removed, will be kept for a period of 7 years following publication of the research, after which it will be shredded or confidentially destroyed. The data (researcher's observation notes, photos, audio-recordings, and interview transcripts) will be securely stored in the locked office of Dr. Ronald McCarville in the Burt Matthews Hall building on the campus of the University of Waterloo to which only researchers associated with this study have access.

Questions and Research Ethics Clearance

If after receiving this letter, you have any questions about this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please

feel free to ask the student researcher or faculty supervisor listed at the top of this sheet.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes at this office at 519-888-4567 Ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

Thank you for your interest in our research and for your assistance with this project.

<u>Consent of Participant</u>

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Juliana Fung under the supervision of Dr. Ronald McCarville of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I may withdraw from the study without loss of remuneration (i.e. gift card) at any time by advising the researcher of this decision.
This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact Susan Sykes, the Director of the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

_____
Print Name

_____
Signature of Participant

_____
Dated at Toronto, Ontario

_____
Witnessed

[Department letterhead]

Information Letter for Shopping Companion

Date: *Insert date of study*

Title of Project: *An Exploration of the Shopping Experience: A Grounded Theory Approach*

Faculty Supervisor: *Ron McCarville, Recreation and Leisure Studies, 519-888-4567 ext 33048, mcarvill@healthy.uwaterloo.ca*

Student Investigator: *Juliana Fung, Recreation and Leisure Studies, jkfung@uwaterloo.ca*

Study Overview

I am a Master's student in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Ronald McCarville.

Your friend has been invited to participate in a study assessing the leisure potential of a recreational shopping experience. Past research has demonstrated that shopping experiences can possess leisure-like characteristics and can impact the way someone feels about themselves and the way they engage and think about stimuli in the shopping environment and vice versa. This study will extend previous research by looking more closely at the personal meanings and subjective experiences of shopping, going beyond the practical functions to explore the leisure-like aspects of recreational shopping and the influences of the retail environment on individuals engaged in the activity.

Although you are not directly participating in this study, I would like to provide you with some information about the study and what your friend (participant) will be asked to do. As the researcher, I am asking you to join your friend (participant) on a shopping trip at a time convenient to her and at a shopping mall selected by her. As your friend's companion, you may wish to take part in the shopping trip which is expected to last at least 2 hours. During this time, as the researcher, I will remain as an unobtrusive observer. In regards to your own shopping experience on this day, I will not be recording any identifying information about you or recording any information about stores you visited or purchases you made.

During the shopping trip, the participant will be asked to photograph 'anything' in the mall/store (i.e. store décor, merchandise, etc.) which leaves an impression on her. All photographs taken within the shopping mall is considered completely confidential and all store names will be blurred out if photographs are published in the final copy of the researcher's thesis. Furthermore, mall associates and other patrons/shoppers are not to be photographed and associates/patrons/shoppers will mot identified individually in any way in any written reports of this research.

Following the shopping phase, your friend (participant) will take part in a face-to-face interview. You may wish to wait for your friend while she completes the interview or you may wish to leave the mall. This decision is entirely up to you.

Your friend's participation in this study is voluntary, and will take approximately 3 hours of her time.

Confidentiality

All information collected is considered completely confidential; indeed, your name or your friend's name will not be included or in any other way associated, with the data (researcher's observation notes, photos, audio-recordings and interview transcripts) collected in the study. Furthermore, you will not be photographed nor will you be identified individually in any way in any written reports of this research. The data (researcher's observation notes, photos, audio-recordings and interview transcripts), with identifying information removed, will be kept for a period of 7 years following publication of the research, after which it will be shredded or confidentially destroyed. The data (researcher's observation notes, photos, audio-recordings and interview transcripts) will be securely stored in the locked office of Dr. Ronald McCarville in the Burt Matthews Hall building on the campus of the University of Waterloo to which only researchers associated with this study have access.

Questions and Research Ethics Clearance

If after receiving this letter, you have any questions about this study, or would like additional information, please feel free to ask the student researcher or faculty supervisor listed at the top of this sheet.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. If you have any comments or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Susan Sykes, Director, Office of Research Ethics at (519) 888-4567 ext. 36005 or by email ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

Appendix D: Information Letter for Mall Administration

[Department letterhead]

[Date of study]

[Mall address]

Dear Mall Administrator/Store Manager,

I am a Master's student in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Ronald McCarville.

I am conducting a study which will assess the leisure potential of a recreational shopping experience. Past research has demonstrated that shopping experiences can possess leisure-like characteristics and can impact the way someone feels about themselves and the way they engage and think about the shopping environment and vice versa. This study will extend previous research by looking more closely at the personal meanings and experiences of shopping, going beyond the practical functions to explore the leisure-like aspects of recreational shopping and the influences of the retail environment on individuals.

Your mall has been selected by one of our research participant as the location for her shopping experience to take place on *[insert date]* between the hours of *[insert start and end times]*. As the researcher, I will be accompanying the participant on her two-hour long shopping trip. During the shopping trip, the participant will be asked to photograph 'anything' in the mall/store (i.e. store décor, merchandise, etc.) which leaves an impression on her. All photographs taken within the shopping mall is considered completely confidential and all store names will be blurred out if photographs are published in the final copy of the researcher's thesis.

Furthermore, mall associates and other patrons/shoppers will not be photographed nor will any associate/patron/shopper be identified individually in any way in any written reports of this research. The photographs will only be used for research purposes and will be kept for a period of 7 years following publication of the research, after which the photos will be destroyed. All photographs will be securely stored in the locked office of Dr. Ronald McCarville in the Burt Matthews Hall building on the campus of the University of Waterloo to which only myself and Dr. McCarville will have access.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study or would like additional information, please contact me at 647-388-9083 or by email jkfung@uwaterloo.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Ronald McCarville at 519-888-4567 ext. 33048 or by email at mcarvill@healthy.uwaterloo.ca.

I will call you in a few days to discuss my study and answer any questions you may have. I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. If you have any comments or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Susan Sykes, Director, Office of Research Ethics at (519) 888-4567 ext. 36005 or by email ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Juliana Fung, Student Researcher

Appendix E: Feedback Letter for Participants

[Date]

Dear [Insert Name of Participant],

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study. As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to develop a theoretical description of people's lived shopping experiences.

The data collected during interviews will contribute to a better understanding of the personal meanings and subjective experiences of shopping, going beyond the practical functions to explore the leisure-like aspects of recreational shopping and the influences of the retail environment on individuals engaged in the activity.

Please remember that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on sharing this information with the research community through seminars, conferences, presentations, and journal articles. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at either the phone number or email address listed at the bottom of the page. If you would like a summary of the results, please let me know now by providing me with your email address. When the study is completed, I will send it to you. The study is expected to be completed by December 1, 2009.

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext., 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

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