

# WHAT DRIVES PHARMACY CUSTOMERS? EXPERIENCE AND CONVENIENCE IN THE SPANISH MARKET

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## RESUMEN

This paper provides new insights in the explanation of shopping behaviour in the context of pharmacies. It's purpose is to explore the impact of experiential and utilitarian value on customer satisfaction and subsequently on consumer shopping patterns in the pharmacy context in Spain, specifically in the parapharmaceutical sector.

Data were gathered from a sample of 3377 customers of 28 different pharmacies spread throughout the Spanish territory. Structural equation modeling was employed to assess the proposed research model empirically.

Results revealed that, even though customers of a pharmacy are usually driven by necessity and utilitarian reasons, experiential values positively influence their satisfaction with the pharmacy and in turn, satisfaction will positively influence shopping patterns by increasing the number of products bought and the frequency of their visits.

The experiential approach in the pharmacy sector leads us to recomend managerial strategies to deliver a superior customer experience which should result in higher profits.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *consumer behaviour, consumer experience, pharmacy, consumer satisfaction.*

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## 1. Introduction

Understanding and enhancing the customer experience sits atop most marketing and chief executives' agenda. Creating superior customer experiences seems to be one of the central objectives in today's retailing environments.

The way consumers evaluate retailer's offer –through experiential and utilitarian values- and their subsequent satisfaction have become a major concern for all the participants in the retailing business due to the influence exerted on desired consumer shopping patterns (Grewal et al., 2009).

Despite the recognition of the importance of customer experience by practitioners, the academic literature investigating this topic has been limited (Verhoef et al., 2009).

This paper attempts to provide empirical evidence that experiential and utilitarian values have an influence on customer satisfaction, even in such an environment, as pharmacies. A reason for this is that value held in the consumers evaluation process is not so obvious and includes ingredients such as emotions and convenience (Cottet, et al. 2006).

The results of the study will enable retailers to identify the characteristics they should stress in order to give more value to the outlet, and as a consequence increase customer satisfaction and achieve desired shopping patterns.

The paper is structured in four differentiated sections. We first describe the main literature on the topic and we describe the Spanish pharmacy sector. Secondly we develop an empirical study in the pharmacy sector in order to analyze the relationship between experiential and functional values, consumer satisfaction and its subsequent effect on customer shopping patterns (frequency of visits and number of products purchased as a consequence of cross-selling). Finally, we present the main results and conclusions and we end up with the limitations of the study, and suggest further research topics.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Value

Shopping research has long focused on the utilitarian aspects of shopping, which has often been characterized as a task –functional and rational–, and related closely to whether or not a product acquisition “mission” was accomplished (Babin et al, 1994). However, traditional product acquisition explanations may not fully reflect the totality of the shopping experience and consumer value (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Verhoef, 2009). Therefore, an increasing interest in shopping's hedonic aspects arose some years ago, particularly as researchers recognized the importance of its emotional worth and its potential to drive consumer behavior (Babin et al., 1994; Roy, 1994; Wakefield and Baker, 1998).

In recent years the hedonic aspect of shopping has evolved towards a wider concept: experiential shopping (Schmitt, 2006; Pine and Gilmore, 1998, Puccinelly et al., 2009), meaning that consumers will also obtain value from the affective and emotional aspects of their purchase.

Retailers desire customers who obtain value from their shopping experiences. Such value, whether experiential or utilitarian, will exert a positive effect in customer's outcomes (Kwortnik et al., 2007). Thus, experiential marketing has been spoken of in order to broadly understand retail consumer behavior. To carry out effective business strategies, stores should focus on offering and managing a pleasant buying experience for the consumer (Grewall et al., 2009).

There is no consensual measurement of value (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). Utilitarian value refers to shopping with an aim to be reached: the product is purchased the way a mission is carried out (extrinsic). Utilitarian shopping value reflects the acquisition of products, information or both in an

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efficient manner, and can be viewed as reflecting a more task-oriented, cognitive and nonemotional outcome of shopping.

Hedonic value, illustrates shopping as being an aim in itself (intrinsic). Hedonic shopping value reflects the value received from the multisensory and emotive aspects of the shopping experience. Retail environmental factors, such as design and ambience, can result in enhanced pleasure and arousal (Baker et al., 1992; Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Actually we live in the experiential economy as Schmitts (1999) states.

### ***2.2. From value to satisfaction***

Despite the time and effort devoted by retailers to developing favourable attitudes toward their stores with the goal of increasing repatronage, recent authors question the validity of this attitude behaviour link (Park and MacInnis, 2006). As Grewal (2009) states, research should focus on understanding the contextual factors that reinforced this link.

In particular, very few empirical studies have set into relief what characteristics of the outlet have an impact on the hedonic value, nor those that influence the utilitarian value.

Eroglu et al. (2005) underlined the effect of crowding on shopping values and satisfaction. However, other atmospheric characteristics must be taken into account. Our empirical study presented here will try to make that lacking element clearer. It will also allow us to measure the effect of value (both experiential and utilitarian) on customer satisfaction.

### ***2.3. From satisfaction to shopping patterns***

The main interest for retailers is to increase profit which, in turn, will be achieved via maintaining loyal patronage patterns, and increasing the amount of money consumers spend per shopping visit.

In mall environments, since Babin et al. (1994) it is assumed that those shops which best satisfy the customer turn out to be more profitable, especially if they are able to provide satisfaction to both experiential and utilitarian type of shoppers. Further, Babin and Darden (1996) argued that store-induced affect could influence level of shopping satisfaction and subsequently customer expenditure. When a shopping trip is perceived as exciting, consumers may visit it more frequently (Lumpkin et al., 1986). Recently, Keng, et al. (2007) note that customer experiential value positively affects customer behavioural intentions by performing cross-buying strategies that will give the firm the chance to increase revenues and profit. Customers who show a cross-buying tendency are more profitable who those who don't (Kumar et al., 2008).

## **3. The Pharmacy situation in Spain**

European pharmacy market is a regulated model vs. the deregulated model existing in other countries like United States. In Spain, the pharmacy model is based on a pharmacist as a health agent permanently in duty, and in a "network of pharmacies" as a private healthcare establishment of public interest.

Spanish pharmacies network is considered as one of the most intensive in terms of distribution. In fact, 98, 9 % of the Spanish population has at least one pharmacy near their home. (Consejo General del Colegio de Farmacéuticos, 2009). As a consequence, Spanish pharmacy system with 21.000 pharmacies is the closest and most accessible being the third country in Europe, after Belgium and Greece with the highest number of pharmacies per inhabitant (2.159 inhabitants per pharmacy).

Pharmacy retailers in Spain are mainly small and medium businesses with less than 50m<sup>2</sup> on average that implies low concentration and purchasing power in such fragmented and atomized industry. Compared to Europe the average sale per pharmacy in Spain is among the lowest (500.000 €/year),

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however drug consumption being above European Union average, and average price for medicines are the lowest except France (Padilla, 2007).

Government regulation on pharmacies as a consequence of universal social security system in Spain heavily affects business dynamics. Price of prescriptions are regulated by the government, which in order to reduce the sanitary deficit has heavily pushed down medicines average price promoting as well the sale of non branded medicines.

As a consequence of this policy and also threatened by European Union deregulation pharmacies have been forced to look for new sources of income: wider assortment, adding parapharmaceutical products to their portfolio, improving service, extending opening hours and adding promotion to build loyalty have been the main pharmacies reaction towards this new environment (Doucette and McDonough, 2002).

As prescriptions are mainly bought for utilitarian reasons (necessity) the pharmacy appearance was not relevant for the business, but the fact that pharmacies are now starting to compete in the parapharmaceutical sector with more modern and sophisticated retailers as hypermarkets and supermarkets makes a great difference (Gavilán, 2010).

In parallel social transformations like higher interest in health and beauty arise as new opportunities for the pharmaceutical business, Nevertheless, the importance of the experiential and the utilitarian aspects as drivers of satisfaction is not clear enough nor if it has a translation in shopping patterns that could represent an opportunity for the parapharmaceutical supply.

### 4. Hypothesis

Understand one's customer is the key to retailing success (Grewal, 2009). This study posits that both, experiential and utilitarian value, will positively affect satisfaction levels despite the fact that the pharmacy has traditionally been an utilitarian domain. More specifically, the proposed model examines the extent to which value influences customer satisfaction in the pharmacy, and consequently customer shopping patterns.

Verhoef et al.(2009) defined consumer experience as "holistic in nature", experience involves the customer cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical response to the retailer. Experience can be created by those factors that the retailer can control, like service interface or retail environment, but also by factors outside the retailer's control like the purpose of shopping. Consumer goals influence the way consumers perceive the retail environment and, consequently, their satisfaction with the shopping experience (Puccinelli, 2009).

In the pharmacy environment, consumer goals have a special meaning due to the nature of the product: drugs. Most of the clients are "on a mission" shoppers. In such conditions, greater congruency between shopping goals and the store's external layout produces higher perceptions of variety and satisfaction (Morales et al., 2005). Thus, we can expect that experiential value created by the personal interaction and the atmospheric variables provide greater satisfaction. Therefore we posit that:

*H1: Experiential value obtained by consumers during the purchase at the pharmacy exerts a positive influence in their satisfaction.*

Next, this study explores the relationship between consumer utilitarian value and satisfaction. Situationally involved consumers completing their shopping trips efficiently results in utilitarian value. Utility can be conceptualized as the efficiency of an exchange encounter (Mathwick et al. 2001). It is based on the convenience of the schedule – in the pharmacy this factor is maximum with a 24 hour opening schedule-, the lack of waiting time, product availability and the closeness of the retailer. Thus the following hypothesis is proposed:

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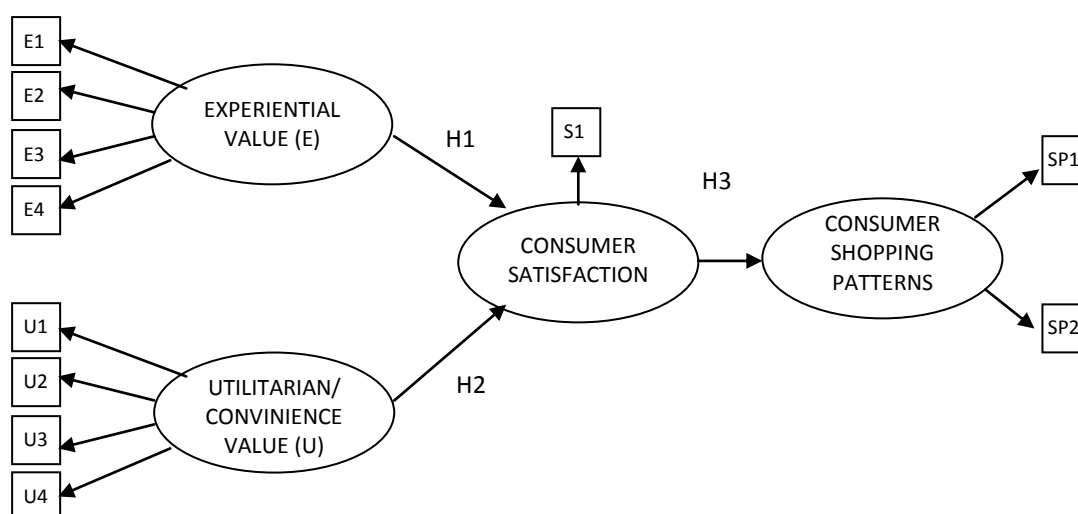
*H2: There is a positive relationship between utilitarian/convenience value obtained by consumers and their satisfaction.*

Relationship between satisfaction and behavior has been widely study in marketing. Nowadays, retailers assume that their growth and profitability is being determined by the things that make differences in customer satisfaction. Greater consumer satisfaction with experience and convenience can significantly increase the chance to return to the same store (Grewal et al., 2009). Other relevant indicator of satisfaction is the number of products bought per visit. Pharmacy's customers buy an average of 1,7 products per visit (Asepime, 2009); nevertheless this figure increases when the sale of prescriptions is combined with that of parapharmaceutical products, through cross-selling strategies o advice selling.

The satisfaction obtained via experiential or utilitarian aspects of shopping will crystallize in a higher number of products sold per shopping visit. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H3. Satisfaction with the pharmacy will have a positive effect in consumer shopping patterns.*

FIGURE 1  
*Hypothesis and relations of the research model*



## 4. Method

The methodology utilized for this resarch was quantitative in nature. Data were collected in september 2009 from 3.602 customers of 28 different pharmacies spread troughout the Spanish territory. Respondents were asked to fill out a personal questionnaire based on a 5-point agree- disagree Likert scale structured in differentiated sections. A total of 3.337 valid questionnaires were received. In order to achieve the research objectives, the questionnaire was designed to provide the information requiered. To measure the experiential vs. the utilitarian shopping values the Mathwic et al.'s (2001) scale was adapted to the pharmacy environment.

TABLE 1  
*Items measuring the value construct*

<b>Experiential Value</b>	E1: This pharmacy is a pleasant shop
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<b>Utilitarian/Convenience Value</b>	E2: This pharmacy is an attractive shop E3: In this pharmacy service is excellent E4: In this pharmacy the personnel is very helpful
	U1: This pharmacy has convenient opening hours U2: In this pharmacy I don't have to wait. U3: This pharmacy has always the product I'm looking for U4: This pharmacy is close to my house

Customer satisfaction was measured by a single item, where customers rated its satisfaction level in a 5-point Likert scale

A pharmacy, as any other business needs to focus in the key factors that improve its marketing and financial performance. Loyalty and number of products sold per visit are two of the seven key metrics proposed by Petersen et al. (2009) as indicators of the performance of the retailer. Thus, we measure shopping patterns with these two indicators.

TABLE 2  
*Items measuring consumer shopping patterns*

<b>Shopping patterns</b>	SP1: Number of products bought during the visit SP2: Frequency of visits (Loyalty)
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## 5. Results

Data analyses were conducted in two phases. First, the factor structure, reliability and validity of the latent constructs in the model were assessed. Subsequently, the parameters of the structural model shown in Figure 1 were estimated.

### 5.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Reliability, and Validity

The measurement model with all 4 factors and 11 indicators was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis. A Maximum Likelihood method was used for estimations. Inspection of the model revealed a respectable fit. All fit indexes: Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI) and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) are above recommended threshold of 0,9. Also the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is low: 0,045.

*Reliability of constructs:* The results obtained suggest that the measurements of the constructs through the chosen items are reliable. Reliability can be assessed from the measurement model by the composite reliability estimates, exceeding the recommended 0,70 threshold for all constructs, extracted variance estimates exceeding the recommended 0,50 threshold, and coefficient alpha estimates ranging from 0,71 and 0,75 (Nunnally, 1978; Fornell & Lacker, 1981; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Therefore, we have evidence of construct reliability. The results obtained are given in Table 3.

*Convergent Validity.* Convergent validity can be assessed from the measurement model by determining whether each indicator's estimated maximum likelihood ( $\lambda$ ) loading on the underlying construct is high and significant (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Levy & Varela, 2006). In our study all factor loadings exceed 0,60 and were highly significant ( $p < 0,001$ ).

TABLE 3  
*Results of the confirmatory analysis*

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Standardized factor loading.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>	<i>Construct Reliability</i>	<i>Extracted Variance</i>
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		(standard error)				
<b>Experiential Value</b>	E1	0,782	-	0,71	0,71	0,51
	E2	0,773 (0,023)	38,168			
	E3	0,666 (0,03)	32,559			
	E4	0,625 (0,03)	30,299			
<b>Utilitarian/ Convenience Value</b>	U1	0,690	-	0,75	0,77	0,50
	U2	0,740 (0,033)	30,627			
	U3	0,601(0,041)	24,220			
	U4	0,657 (0,034)	26,836			
<b>Consumer shopping patterns</b>	SP1	0,813	-	0,73	0,76	0,59
	SP2	0,775 (0,036)	6,632			

*Discriminant Validity:* Discriminant validity refers to the fact that each factor or latent variable should represent a different dimension to the rest (Levy and Varela, 2006). Fornell and Larcker (1981) proposed that discriminatory validity exists between two latent variables since the extracted variance (pvc) estimates of the latent dimensions exceed all phi correlations between pairs of constructs (Table 4). The results obtained indicate that all the correlations between factors are less than 0.50 (Levy and Varela, 2006) and that the average extracted variance of the latent dimensions, which oscillates between 0.51 and 0.59, is, in all cases, higher than the values taken by the correlations between factors.

TABLE 4  
*Means, standard deviations and correlations between constructs*

<i>Constructo</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Stand. deviat</i>	<i>Experiential Value</i>	<i>Utilitarian Value</i>	<i>Satisfactio n</i>	<i>Consumer Shopping Patterns</i>
<b>Experiential Value</b>	4,59	0,52	1			
<b>Utilitarian Value</b>	4,27	0,62	0,46	1		
<b>Satisfaction</b>	4,51	0,57	0,49	0,29	1	
<b>Consumer Shopping Patterns</b>	4,10	0,33	0,16	0,11	0,19	1

## 5.2. Structural Model and Hypothesis Tests

Since the measurement model was found to be satisfactory, the hypothesized structural model proposed in Figure 2 was then estimated. The structural model also reveals a respectable fit:  $\chi^2$ : (40) = 251,82,  $p = 0,000$ ; Comparative Fit Index (CFI): 0,976; Goodness of Fit Index (GFI): 0,983; Normed Fit Index (NFI): 0,971; Tucker Lewis Index (TLI): 0,967; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA): 0,045. The standardized path coefficients, and p-values are shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5  
*Structural Model: Standardized Path Coefficients*

			Coefficient	p-value
Satisfaction	←	Utilitarian Value	0,169	0,000
Satisfaction	←	Experiential Value	0,635	0,000
Shopping pattern	←	Satisfaction	0,417	0,000

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Results confirm that there is a positive and significant relationship between the utilitarian /convenience value and the consumer satisfaction. It is interesting to note that the experiential value exerts the highest influence in consumer satisfaction. Therefore, H1 and H2 are supported and we can state that consumers obtain a greater satisfaction from the experiential side of the purchase than from its mere convenience.

Results also show a positive and significant relationship between satisfaction and desired consumer behavior and suggest that a consumer who is satisfied with its purchase experience will tend to visit the pharmacy more often and acquire a higher number of products per visit. Therefore H3 is supported.

Retailer's profit is achieved via consumer shopping patterns. Results suggest a positive and direct relationship between satisfaction and shopping patterns in terms of loyalty and amount of product purchase per visit, thus H3 is supported.

### 6. Discussion and limitations

This research work was about the impact of experiential and utilitarian value on satisfaction and behaviour in the pharmaceutical environment. The effect of both values has been emphasized. Moreover, we get an empirical evidence of the importance on experiential factors in a traditionally useful background.

Value does have an influence on customer's satisfaction. Pharmacy retailers in order to give more value to the outlet, can implement strategies aimed to those aspects that generate experience and utility.

According to Verhoef et al. (2009) this study provides a better understanding of the customer experience in the pharmacy and the way the consumer evaluates pharmacy's offer. It is important to remark how results prioritize the experiential value over the useful as a source of satisfaction. Shopping, even at the pharmacy, seems to be an aim in itself. This objective leads client's perception at the establishment (Puccinelli, 2009), as he is looking for a nice, attractive, luminous, clean and tidy environment, where the employer services results in an enhanced pleasure (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974) and induce an affective state of satisfaction (Arnold and Reynolds, 2009).

We can't forget the useful character of this retailer. Shopping at a Pharmacy is conditioned by necessity. Clients go there with a mission, and satisfaction comes from the right and efficacious accomplishment of it. A broad opening time, proximity, not having to wait, and a right availability of products, are important values for the client searching for efficiency and satisfaction drivers.

We conclude that not even in places as utilitarian as pharmacies there is a clear opposition between experiential and utilitarian (Cottet, 2006). Utilitarian and experiential can be seen as contextual factors that reinforced the link between value and satisfaction. Shoppers can therefore during the same period of time expect and evaluate them. Consequently, both are satisfaction drivers.

As the main interest of retailers is to produce more profits, satisfaction is not an aim in itself, but a mediator that should address behaviour. Previous authors, like Keng, et al. (2007) note the impact of experiential value on customer behavioural intentions. In this research we go further and observe the impact of satisfaction on real behaviour: amount of products' purchase during the visit, and behaviour based on memories: frequency of visit. From both perspectives we find evidences of the linkage between satisfaction with utilitarian and experiential values at the pharmacy, satisfaction and behaviour.

We must establish some considerations about this study's limitations. First, and due to the circumstances of the survey, we had to limit the number of items, and that may be a weakness in order to determine some aspects, i.e. satisfaction.



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About conduct, it would be interesting to complete the number of chosen indicators. Replacing remembering frequency of visits and alternatively using an objective data, such as fidelity cards for clients, and adding information about the money spent when shopping. The number of units on each operation is a very accepted indicator of commercial capacity in pharmacies, but from a strategic point of view it would be interesting adding data to discriminate between big clients because of a great number of products, and big clients because of spending more money in their purchases, being the objective of the business.

### 7. Managerial implications and further research

During the last decades, changes in pharmaceutical retailing has been primary aimed to improve the utilitarian value: more opening time, from 8 to 12 and 24 hours, increasing the ratio pharmacy/inhabitant, offering a broad assortment to cope with every client demand, and more personnel at the counter to make waiting time decrease (Gavilán, 2010).

Nevertheless, as we may see in this study and taking into account the new challenges pharmacies must afford —reducing pharmaceutical expenses, more parapharmacy products—, it seems better to think about new strategic lines.

The importance of the experiential value moves us to recommend everything related with the sensorial and emotional experience: Shell marketing, animations on the spot, dermoanalysers as a previous step to cosmetic prescription, spaces dedicated to children, meetings with clients, ludic promotions...

The impact of satisfaction in what we buy, expresses the convenience of counsel-selling. The personnel at the pharmacy must assume a new role, besides a professional and kind service. They must have selling orientation: cross-selling and up-selling. We mustn't forget that parapharmacy products are not well known for most of the clients, and space limitations make it difficult for the client to see many of the offered products. It would be a good idea to create specific stands for dermocosmetics, and placing some of the personnel out of the counter so they may help clients when exploring the products.

As we can see in the study, satisfaction and loyalty are fundamental to obtain good results, and we must take advantage of its relationship. The idea of proximity and the connection between satisfaction and frequency are important facts for the clients. We must sell today, but we must create bonds based on satisfaction. We can get loyal clients using different strategies: giving them cards for counting their parapharmacy purchases, developing communications skills for specific targets (mothers with small children, adult women, young people less than 30 years old, old people), renovating the establishment (decoration or construction). This is really important when we think that the high number of visits to the establishment may easily lead to boredom

There's a difficult and competitive setting for pharmacies in Spain (Capilla, 2007). Because of this, we must develop specific studies to disclose the real impact of the proposed measures that some retailers are already performing. It would be really useful to analyze where they are if we compare them with their competitors in parapharmacy, like perfume shops and hypermarkets, and to study the different types of clients and their utilitarian and experiential values, so the entrepreneurs would take the right strategic decisions.

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