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IDENTIFYING SHOPPING PROBLEMS AND IMPROVING RETAIL PATRONAGE AMONG URBAN FILIPINO CUSTOMERS

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This paper describes the common problems that urban Filipinos encounter while shopping for groceries in supermarkets. Store exit interviews with 500 customers were conducted to elicit reasons for retail patronage and shopping difficulties. Typical Filipino shopping problems are not markedly different from their Western counterparts. Implications on how to improve the shopping experience and retail patronage are identified for Filipino retailers.

Keywords: Grocery shopping, retail patronage, shopping problems, customer dissatisfaction, Philippines

I. INTRODUCTION

Kotler and Keller (2009, p. 482) define retailing to encompass all activities in selling goods or services to the final consumers for personal or business use irrespective of the type of organization, how the goods are sold or where the goods are sold. The retail sector accounts for a sizable share of the Philippine economy. Patalinghug (2001) claimed that the retail trade sector contributed on the average 10.7 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 1981 to 1999 and employed 4.3 million mostly female workers in 1998. Performing the distribution and bulk breaking function, the retail sector serves the population for most of the household requirements.

The typical retailers' marketing decisions include target market, product assortment and procurement, pricing, services and store atmosphere, store activities and experiences, communication and location (Kotler & Keller, 2009, pp. 488-495). The scope of the present study covers aspects of the supermarket[1] which affect retail patronage. Such factors may include satisfiers, which attract the customers to the store, and dissatisfiers, which pose as shopping[2] problems of customers. Thus, two of the retailers' decisions like target market or product procurement are not applicable. For one thing, the target market decision is made when the store is established, while procurement decisions relate to replenishment of store inventory. The remainder of the retailers' marketing decisions are customer-centric and these influence retail patronage.

Such focus on supermarkets is understandable because Filipinos still shop in-store for most of their groceries (AC Nielsen, 2005). Most urban Filipino households shop for groceries on a regular basis to replenish food, health and beauty products, household maintenance and supply,

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and so forth (AC Nielsen, 2005). While Filipinos still purchase most food in traditional outlets such as wet markets, neighborhood stalls/provision stores (*talipapas* and *sari-sari stores*), and street vendors, the share of supermarkets (or modern trade channels) has increasingly grown through the years (AC Nielsen, 2005). The popularity of supermarkets is manifested in the fact that about 61 percent of the family expenditure among all income classes in Metro Manila could now be purchased at the supermarkets, based on the 2006 Family Income and Expenditure Survey of the National Statistics Office. Lower income households would most likely spend almost all their income on the most basic necessities such as food.

The United States and United Kingdom account for 75 percent of global online grocery retailing in 2009 and its volume share is just 1.5 percent of the global retail grocery market (Bharatbook, 2010). In the Philippines, online grocery retailing is almost negligible and grocery delivery services are very few, e.g., Rustan's Supermarket. Online marketing in social networking sites is limited to durables (e.g., cars, computers) and lifestyle products (cosmetics, apparel, footwear, etc.). However, a popular non-store distribution channel is direct selling where Morales (2010) claimed that more than half of the P35 billion market for personal care, beauty, health and wellness industry is distributed through the direct selling channel (e.g., Avon, Natasha, Fuller Life, Boardwork, etc.).

In 2005, AC Nielsen estimated that supermarkets accounted for 37 percent of retail sales, with average retail sales of P6.6 billion every month based on AC Nielsen Retail Audit of 100+ categories. The large supermarkets capture 41 percent of total supermarket sales and AC Nielsen claimed that supermarkets located inside the malls have three times bigger sales than those outside malls. By contrast, *sari-sari* stores only contribute about 30 percent of retail sales while making up 90 percent of the universe of stores. Most of the supermarkets are located in urbanized areas of the Philippines (AC Nielsen, 2005).

In spite of the claim of Wilson (2005) that shopping has become one of America's biggest cultural obsessions, a few others share a different view. Dickinson (2006) and Aylott and Mitchell (1998) argued that grocery shopping has become a chore and a source of stress in United Kingdom. Americans have increased their shopping by computer, television, mail and telephone to avoid retail shopping difficulties (Morgenson, 1993). Several economic and demographic changes such as fall in real wages, increasing working hours and more women working outside the home have put a strain on family time (Kelly, 1994). Fram and Axelrod (1990) suggested that customers want to spend less time on shopping. In the United Kingdom, Dickinson (2006) asserted that customers have become impatient shoppers with increasing dissatisfaction being associated with grocery shopping. Most of these shopping problems have been documented in the United States and United Kingdom (Dickinson, 2006; Aylott & Mitchell, 1998) and the paucity of literature from the developing countries (e.g., Yavas, Kaynak & Borak, 1981; Gutierrez, 2004) on this issue motivated this study.

This descriptive study attempts to respond to three research questions. First, what are the reasons for supermarket patronage? Second, what are the common problems faced by Filipino shoppers in supermarkets? Finally, do Filipinos encounter similar shopping problems as their counterparts from Western countries? Based on the study's findings, implications for Filipino retailers are identified. Such knowledge of supermarket shopping problems could lead to measures to improve the customer experience, promote more retail patronage, and eventually improve sales and profitability of Filipino retailers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature survey covers two retailing issues crucial to managers. The first section tackles retail patronage while the second section delves on consumer shopping problems.

Retail Patronage

Understanding retail patronage is a critical issue for retailers in order to target appropriate customers and direct retail marketing programs to those most likely to purchase (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006). Decades of research on retail patronage has both conceptual and practical benefits. The importance of retail patronage to store owners has grown more than ever because of some developments in the retail industry and the larger society.

Consumers have become more powerful with more choices available brought by competition, expansion of retail capacity or floor space, and some supermarkets targeting a much wider market than before (Hyman, 2006). For instance, the expansion of the value sector in the United Kingdom has led some supermarkets to cater to a wider market, with retailers such as Primark, Matalan and Peacocks having a relatively classless customer profiles (Hyman, 2006). It is not also true that consumers are buying less because unit sales are up by more than 3 percent in 2005 and by more than 5 percent in 2004 (Hyman, 2006).

Pan and Zinkhan (2006) present an excellent review of studies on retail patronage. Both authors performed a meta-analysis on the empirical findings of 45 previous studies on retail patronage. Most of these retail patronage studies are conducted in the Western setting and very few studies originate from the less developed countries. Their dependent variable, retail patronage, has two dimensions (1) store choice and (2) frequency of visit. They grouped their predictor variables into three: (1) product-relevant factors (e.g., low price, quality, selection or assortment); (2) market-relevant factors (e.g., convenient parking facilities, convenient location, convenient opening hours, friendliness of salespeople, service, fast checkout, store atmosphere, store image; and (3) personal factors (e.g. store/store-type attitude, gender, income, age).

Pan and Zinkhan (2006) correlated the predictors and the two dimensions of retail patronage, and rank-ordered the predictors. For store choice, wider selection (or assortment) was ranked first, followed by service, quality, store atmosphere, low price levels, convenient location, fast checkout, convenient opening hours, friendliness of salespeople, and convenient parking facilities. For shopping frequency, store image, store attitude and gender, are important predictors. Income and age were not significant at all. Based on the categories of predictor variables, market- and product-relevant factors tend to influence store choice, while personal factors (e.g., demographics, attitude toward store) predict shopping frequencies (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006). They also suggested additional research to explore the effect of income and age on retail patronage across various store types and product types.

Consumer Shopping Problems

Sangter (2009) pointed out that the first step of any shopper marketing strategy is to understand how people shop in the category, particularly if there are problems and the root causes of such problems. In claiming that the American nation is shopping obsessed, Wilson (2006) provided evidence that New York Times launched a weekly supplement called the Critical Shopper. She even noted magazines devoted to shopping (e.g., Lucky and Cargo), best-selling books (e.g., Confessions of a Shopaholic) and even academic studies (e.g., Harvard Guide to Shopping). Prus and Dawson (1991) suggested that shopping maybe more recreational or more laborious depending on the shoppers' interpretations of their encounters with other people and their personal situations. However, a number of researchers disagree that shopping is an enjoyable activity (Dickinson, 2006; Aylott & Mitchell, 1998; Morgenson, 1993; Fram & Axelrod, 1990).

Aylott and Mitchell (1998) proposed two major grocery shopping stressors as crowding and queueing, the latter being a function of the former. Using 29 focus groups with a total of 239 respondents in Sunderland City in the United Kingdom, the exploratory study found that the stressors associated with crowding include "badly behaved young children, parking problems, shopping cart maneuverability and collisions, checkout problems, aisle width and congestion, time pressure, seasonal shopping, overheating, out-of-stock products and obstructions by elderly people or prams." Other stressors identified are connected to "overpriced goods, lack of money, and too much choice", and minor ones which include "not being able to reach high shelves, friction caused by shopping with others, finding cash dispensing machines inoperative, being overwhelmed by a plethora of promotions and information, and having one's children tempted by store advertisements and the pestering that results" (Aylott & Mitchell, 1998). Moreover, to identify problems with layout, merchandising packaging, Underhill (2009) conducted extensive video observations of consumer shopping patterns from the time the customer enters the parking lot to the mall then to the store.

In the United Kingdom (UK), every adult has a list of 18 outstanding chores which need to be done at any time (Dickinson, 2006) which implies that the time spent on shopping is being reduced. In reporting the results of a Visa UK study, Dickinson (2006) claimed that 70 percent of shoppers will balk or walk out of the shop if the queue is too long, 76 percent patronize late-night or 24-hour supermarkets, 43 percent use self-service checkouts to speed up their shopping trip, 37 percent avoid shops by shopping online, and 10 percent become seriously annoyed as soon they join any queue. Visa UK estimated that consumers spend about 273 days of their lives waiting in queues and it takes 35- to 44 year olds 12 minutes in a queue to get seriously annoyed (Dickinson, 2006). Even in online shopping, customers abandon their shopping carts even before the purchase is completed (Rajamma, 2006).

It would be interesting to investigate whether the Filipino shoppers will encounter the same problems faced by their counterparts in Western countries. Three observations which seem to influence the Filipino shopper problems include the shopper profile, household disposable income, and the store location. The Philippines has a young population and lower household disposable income compared to most Western countries (NSO, 2007). Very few Philippine supermarkets offer destination shopping preferring to locate in high-traffic areas and town centers (Bautista, 2005; De Leon, 2002).

Burke (2002, p.414) outlines four stages of the shopping process that ultimately impacts on the in-store shopping experience: (1) Entering the store; (2) Entering a specific aisle, section or department of the store; (3) Checking and paying for items; and (4) Postpurchase customer service. Before a customer enters a store, prepurchase shopping problems may occur such as the choice of a sales outlet to patronize (Claxton & Brent Ritchie, 1979). The scope of the study is delimited to stages 1-3 identified by Burke (2002). Each of the stressors identified by Aylott and Mitchell (1998) can be categorized under each stage of Burke's

(2002) four-stage shopping process for easier analysis and design of strategies to reduce customer shopping problems. Retailers must carefully plan and implement strategies for each stage to be able to satisfy the customer. Service blueprinting may be conducted and each fail point in the service process must be anticipated and properly planned for to mitigate any dissatisfaction from the customers (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007).

In conclusion, Aylott and Mitchell (1998) suggested that every shopper has ways coping with shopping stressors and the shopping outcome is an interplay of individual stress reaction factors (e.g., individual demographics, personality, lifestyle, social class, coping ability, etc.) and store-related factors (e.g., crowd density, staff attitude and training, stock layout/relocation, location, product assortment, music, lighting, heating, etc.). The retailer obviously has little control of the individual stress reaction factors but certainly has control of the policies which affect the store-related factors.

III. METHODOLOGY

This present study is a rider to a two-part main study (Gutierrez, 2008) on evaluating the effectiveness of in-store radio and measuring awareness of sample brands in participating supermarkets. Store exit interviews were employed to collect unaided customer responses to items on reasons for store patronage, store last visited, customer shopping problems or difficulties inside the store and suggested improvements in the store. As a rider study, only a limited number of items could be included to reduce the length of the questionnaire and the interview time. In Metro Manila, Batangas and Pampanga, the questionnaire was in English and Tagalog languages while in the cities of Cebu and Cagayan de Oro, English and Cebuano languages were used.

Six hundred randomly selected customers exiting the checkout counters from 12 supermarkets were intercepted, pre-qualified, and requested to participate in the survey conducted by trained interviewers in September 2006. The 12 supermarkets were chosen from a network of about 200 Philippine supermarkets whose owners have agreed to participate in the study. However, two Cebu supermarkets opted out in this portion of the study, reducing the participating supermarkets to 10 and the number of respondents to 500. Only one respondent per household was allowed. The quota of 50 customers per supermarket was distributed over weekend, weekday, and hours of store operation. There were three supermarkets each in Metro Manila and Cagayan de Oro City, two supermarkets in Batangas City, one each in Cebu City and in Angeles City, Pampanga to represent the four major geographic and sales territorial areas – Metro Manila, balance Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. The names of the 10 supermarkets are not revealed for reasons of confidentiality.

Using the AC Nielsen supermarket classification, two supermarkets are classified as small with 3 to 7 checkout counters; three classified as medium with 8-15 checkout counters and five classified as large with over 15 checkout counters. Six of the supermarkets are located inside malls. All the supermarkets are targeting the middle class (broad C) and the lower social classes D and E. Only one appeared to serve the upscale market being located inside an upscale mall. Eight of the 10 supermarkets have airconditioning. Medium and large supermarkets provide both shopping carts and baskets while the smaller ones only provide shopping baskets.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample profile is a typical Filipino mother shopping for her household. It is 89 percent female, with 55 percent aged 30 years and above. The median age was 32. More than two thirds shop at least once a week, which is not surprising in a developing country like the Philippines where the daily income is just enough for the needs of the household for the day. Other details of the sample are described in Table 1.

Table 1
Description of the Sample

Profiling Variable	Details	Percent
Gender	Male	11.0
	Female	89.0
Age	13-19 years	13.4
	20-29 years	31.6
	30-39 years	22.2
	40 years and above	32.8
Frequency of grocery shopping	About once a month	7.8
	2 to 3 times a month	21.6
	About once a week	28.2
	2 to 3 times a week	31.0
	Everyday almost everyday	11.4

Table 2 provides details of reasons for supermarket patronage. The percentages for small, medium and large supermarkets are also included. Location remains the popular reason for store patronage especially for small and large supermarkets. Seventy percent of the households shop once a week or more than once a week. Such practice is possible because most of the shoppers live near the supermarket. Cheaper price is the second popular reason for small and medium sized supermarkets and less pronounced in larger supermarkets. Location and lower prices already account for 71 percent of the shoppers' reasons for store patronage. Wider selection (assortment) which was ranked first in Western countries (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006) is just the third most important attribute for Filipino urban shoppers. It is only considered by about 9 percent of the customers of medium and large supermarkets, and 4 percent of small supermarket customers.

Table 2
Reasons for Supermarket Patronage – Philippines

Reason	Percentage (%) Small	Medium	Large	All
Malapit sa amin (near our house)	42.6	22.6	49.8	40.3
Mura ang groceries (cheap groceries)	43.4	43.5	17.9	30.7
Kumpleto ang paninda (complete assortment)	4.1	10.7	9.6	8.8
Maluwag (spacious)	3.3	2.8	4.0	3.5
Malamig (cool, with airconditioning)	-	4.5	4.0	3.3
May reward points (has reward points)	-	-	3.7	2.2
Madaling makita ang item (easy-to-find items; organized)	2.5	0.6	2.3	1.8
Mababait ang mga staff (friendly and helpful staff)	3.3	1.1	0.7	1.3
Others	0.8	14.2	8.0	8.0
Total respondents	100	150	250	500
Total classified responses	122	177	301	600

500 respondents, multiple responses possible

Convenient location and low price which were considered to be first and second most important reasons for retail patronage by Filipinos is only ranked sixth and fifth respectively in Western countries. Shoppers in Western countries, who have more disposable income than those in urban Philippines, would most likely desire a wider range of groceries, drive their own vehicles to shop, and be willing to travel longer distances. Filipinos, who are mostly on tighter budget would buy only the necessities and are always on the lookout for bargains. The population density in urban Philippines is also very high which make most supermarkets accessible to residential locations.

Forty two percent of the supermarket shoppers claimed to have encountered shopping problems. Customers’ shopping problems are described in Table 3. For comparison, the findings from another supermarket study which focused on toiletries in 2000 are also included (Gutierrez, 2002). It is interesting to note that size of the supermarket is inversely proportional to the share of shopping problems. The size of the supermarket could indicate wider product assortment, more financial resources, professional management, and customer service orientation; hence lesser customer problems.

Table 3
Supermarket Shopping Problems - Philippines

Shopping Problem Type	**Percentage (%)**				
	Groceries (2006)				**Toiletry**
	Small	Medium	Large	All	**(2000)**
Mabagal na pila (slow queue)	1.9	14.6	53.4	19.4	17.3
Mainit, mahina ang aircon (hot)	34.3	1.1	-	13.6	-
Hindi kumpleto ang stocks (stockouts)	23.8	5.6	9.6	13.6	11.9
Request to carry some items in the assortment	2.9	30.3	2.7	11.0	-
Lakihan ang space; makipot ang aisles (crowded)	1.0	16.9	6.8	7.7	19.0
Madilim, dagdagan ng ilaw (too dark)	18.1	-	-	7.0	-
More parking space	-	15.7	-	4.4	-
Lagyan ng kainan sa loob (include a food shop)	3.8	6.7	-	3.7	-
Maraming ipis (many cockroaches, cleanliness)	9.5	-	-	3.5	-
High price	1.0	1.1	5.5	2.2	11.0
Beauty consultant was not helpful	-	-	-	-	11.0
Store personnel / beauty consultant was not	-	1.1	4.1	1.5	10.3
welcoming	3.7	1.9	17.9	12.4	4.3
Others					
	100	150	250	500	502
Sample size	111	89	73	273	863
Total classified responses	40.7	32.6	26.7	100	
Share of shopping problems (%)					

Slow queue or slow checkout was considered the first shopping problem of urban Filipinos. This already accounts for more than half of the problem in large supermarkets. Even in the United States Underhill (2009, p. 34, 169) claimed that waiting time is the single most important factor in customer satisfaction. The next two shopping problems are stockouts and high-temperature store conditions making shopping uncomfortable. The incidence of these two problems is higher in smaller supermarkets. Among medium sized supermarkets, customers demanded bigger shopping area, more items to be carried by the store and adequate parking spaces. This indicates that more affluent customers than what the supermarkets owners expected are patronizing these stores.

Only 23 percent respondents were aware of ongoing in-store promotions, indicating that some of the problems not verbalized during the unaided portion could be informational. Problems on product information were more pronounced in the toiletry study (Gutierrez, 2002). Information problems could be category-specific because most respondents desire to have some information on how to use some of the health and beauty products. Toiletry respondents were also prompted specifically by the questionnaire items on product information problems while in the grocery study, the enumeration of shopping problems was unaided.

In his online survey of 2,120 consumers, Burke (2002) enumerated in-store shopping features that consumers must have or should have: knowledgeable, helpful sales assistants, have products in stock, and cashiers who can scan and bag products, accept payment and provide a printed receipt at checkout. Sales assistance becomes less important for frequently-purchased products (e.g., groceries, health and beauty care, apparel, music, movies and books, and toy and books) compared to infrequently-purchased durables (e.g., major appliances, small appliances, consumer electronics, furniture, lighting, and hardware). Other desired but not mandatory features are printed circulars and signs of new and promotional items, a map of the store, sales associates with computer access for easy look up of detailed product information, everyday low prices, regular and seasonal sales, and individual item pricing (Burke, 2002). Using discriminant analysis to determine the importance of shopping attributes in 10 product categories, Burke (2002) claimed that consumers want fast and convenient shopping for frequently purchased non-durable goods (e.g., groceries, health and beauty care items, and school and office supplies).

Given that there are shopping problems, did the households patronize the same store during the last store visit? Almost three-fourths (72.8%) visited the same store while the remainder visited another store. Reasons for visiting another store are included in Table 4.

Table 4
Why did you visit another store? – Philippines

Reason for visiting another store	Percent
Namasyal sa mall, nag-grocery na rin (went malling, then shopped for groceries)	20.9
Mas kumpleto ang items doon (more complete items)	20.0
Malapit din sa amin (also near our house)	15.5
Napadaan kasi ako doon (just passed by the place)	13.6
Mababa din kasi ang presyo (cheaper price)	9.1
Bumili ng gamot (bought medicine)	6.4
Malamig (cool)	4.5
Others	10.0
Percent visiting another store	27.2
Total responses	110

Multiple responses are possible

About one fifth (20.9%) claimed to have visited the mall and went on to shop for groceries before going home while another 14 percent visited another store because they passed by the store after going to church or visiting friends. Some of these other supermarkets are also near their houses (15.5%), which make them convenient to the customers. The other reasons for visiting another store indicate a switching behavior among the households when the primary store experienced stockouts or did not carry items desired by the customers. An interesting feature is the incidence of customers doing grocery shopping in drugstores. About six percent bought groceries after buying medicine in Mercury Drugstores, which also sells groceries in some of its stores located in high-traffic areas.

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RETAIL MANAGEMENT

This study makes an academic contribution to research on retail marketing especially from the perspective of emerging economies or less developed countries. This study validates what is already known that location is crucial decision of a retailer. A majority of urban Filipino shoppers still go to a nearby store and are very price-conscious. Although some retailers target more affluent customers, price remains a determinant factor in choosing a place to shop in. This also implies that customers still consider price at face value instead of evaluating the product price relative to other services of the supermarket such as trained personnel and a more pleasant store environment, e.g., air conditioning. Assortment, which is the number one predictor of store choice in Western countries, also figures in the minds of Filipino customers although at a lower importance level. However, this study has shown that Filipino customers are willing to go to another store to purchase the item they need which is unavailable in their primary store. The proximity of the secondary store to the residence explains such behavior.

Most of the identified customer problems could be solved by improving store operations. More checkout counters, cashiers and baggers could be assigned during peak shopping hours, which are normally during weekday evenings and weekends. Investments in technology such as barcoding or RFID (radio frequency identification) could also speed up the processing of payments. Retailers must understand the psychology of waiting and implement measures to better manage the waiting time of customers on the queue (Underhill, 2009; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007; Jones, Berski & Tom, 1980).

Stockouts could be prevented by better inventory management and prioritizing the popular items by having enough buffer stocks. Retailers have to carefully study some items being requested to be carried by the supermarket such as frozen food, dry goods section, hardware or even appliances as these involve additional working capital and some investments in equipment such as refrigeration facilities. Some stores such as Shoemart, Shopwise, and Robinsons have followed the hypermart concept and have carried most of these items requested under one roof to make one-stop shopping achievable.

Retailers should design store environments that reduce the expected shopping difficulties of customers (Gutierrez, 2004). Shoppers have varying types of product and store knowledge that may affect customers' navigational search strategies (Gutierrez, 2004). For example, stores should have prominent store signs to enable customers to find the items better. Complementary or related product categories should be located together. Customers have trouble finding some items inside the store because store signage was poor (Underhill, 2009), items had been transferred, or items were simply not carried by the store. Store personnel should be available to help customers look for these items or respond to product information questions of the customers in a friendly and helpful manner. This need is more pressing for toiletry products. Finally, improvements in the general store environment are also necessary. For a supermarket that does not have an air conditioning system, it needs to improve on its sanitation and incidence of dusty items. Another supermarket had to improve its lighting system. In the same vein, Wilson (2006) reminded retailers to focus on what matters most to the customers—merchandise quality, dressing rooms for clothing stores, the lighting, restrooms, attitude of sales associates and the overall condition (e.g., cleanliness).

If shopping has become a chore and a boring activity, retailers have to think more about providing entertainment and excitement to shopping. Cohen (2006) suggested five Es: educate the customers on the information they need to make the purchase; elevate consumers with exciting breakthrough products; explore new methods of making customers lives better such as in-store cafes where customers can read a newspaper or check their email during a break in their shopping trip; entertain customers such as Starbucks producing entertainment material and selling them in-store, and evaluate the concerns of customers by periodically obtaining feedback through surveys on shopping requirements. In this Philippine study, about four percent of the respondents requested for a food shop inside the store or just outside the store. A retailer must think of other services or establishments to go with the supermarket such as automated teller machines (ATMs), repair shops, drug stores, etc.

Taggart (2005) described a web-based tool launched in 2004 by the Coca-Cola Retailing Research Council's (CCRRC) "World According to Shoppers" that helps retailers focus on the various need states of shoppers on different shopping occasions. The nine need states are: care for the family, efficient stock-up, smart budget-shopping, discovery, specific item, reluctance (don't want to shop, but have to), bargain hunting among stores, small-basket grab and go, and immediate consumption. Knowing which need state is dominant and at what time in the store location would enable the retailer to design offerings and marketing programs to increase sales.

The Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA) in the United States had a ShopperCentricity initiative in 2005 that emphasized philosophies and practices that drives customer delight. RILA members examined breakthrough customer innovation in customer-facing businesses such as banking, hospitality, airlines, casinos and restaurants (Kennedy, 2005). An example of such innovation is the deployment of a shared database of store customers' measurements in every store of a men's wear retailer chain. Sales increased because women can now buy clothes for their partners which they know will fit (Kennedy, 2005).

If retailers can bring customers to their stores through their marketing efforts, they should make them happy and provide a delightful shopping experience. After all, marketing has invited them inside the store, so customers ought to be treated like guests.

VI. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Being a rider study has limited the depth of the study. Caution must be made in interpreting the results of the study. Store exit interviews may have amplified problems for some customers who are in a hurry to go home. In addition, findings of the study are not generalizable to rural areas of the Philippines because the sampled areas are in the urban centers of Metro Manila and key cities of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. However, it is also acknowledged that most Philippine supermarkets are located in urban areas.

Future studies could be done at both qualitative and quantitative levels. Shopping with consumers (SWC), first coined by Lowrey, Otnes and McGrath in early 1990s, is a qualitative method which when combined with depth interviews may provide insights that may have been otherwise hidden from researchers. Still another future study may focus on a particular consumer segment such as the Mason and Bearden (2005) food shopping study among elderly consumers, profiling shopping problems and access of physically-challenged customers (Guy, 1983; Guy, 1985), or shopping problems of children (Reece, 1986). A deeper investigation on grocery shopping stressors similar to Aylott and Mitchell's (1998) focus group study may be conducted by extending their exploratory study to a descriptive study. Their results identified a number of grocery shopping stressors but stopped short on the describing the incidence of each stressor. A similar focused group study on grocery shopping stressors could be conducted among Filipinos (Aylott & Mitchell, 1998).

Pan and Zinkhan (2006) suggested a further study of moderators, the interaction between the predictors of retail patronage. Other researchers may consider investigating store loyalty (Flavian, Martinez & Polo, 2001; Knox & Denison, 2000; Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000). Miranda, Konya and Havrila (2005) found that shoppers' satisfaction levels in Melbourne, Australia are not the only reasons for remaining loyal to a store in the face of an inducement of a discounted gasoline in another grocery store. Estimating two separate models on store satisfaction and store loyalty, they found that there is no evidence that shoppers' overall store satisfaction in a store affected store loyalty. It would be interesting to estimate store loyalty models and the interplay of individual stress reaction factors and store-related factors using Philippine data if enough retailers would agree to participate in the study.

In spite of supermarket shopping problems, it would be interesting to know if the urban Filipino customers are satisfied with their frequently visited store. Three months later, in December 2006, customer satisfaction was measured in the same 12 supermarkets and the results are presented in another paper.

NOTES

[1] AC Nielsen defines supermarkets as large retail channels of distribution with at least three check-out counters (COCs). They are classified into: Large: supermarkets with 16 or more COCs; Medium: supermarkets with 8-15 COCs; and Small: supermarkets with 3-7 COCs.

[2] Shopping is defined in terms of product types and the effort that involves comparing competing offerings on price, quality, style, color, etc. Strictly speaking, routine grocery shopping where the customer picks up his or her usual brand from the shelf and does not make any comparisons is not considered shopping (Kotler & Keller, 2009). The broader definition of shopping is utilized in this study, which to an ordinary person, is simply the act of buying or purchasing.

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