Analysis of Value Pursuit Discount Store Customers Using Means–End Chain Theory*

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Abstract

Purpose - This study attempted to identify the value promotion clues that may operate as a consumer's motive, by shedding new light on consumer value and by reconstructing each variable analyzed through the means–end chain (MEC) theory.

Research design, data, and methodology - In this study, 202 copies of effective questionnaires using the data of Yang and Ju (2012) were subjected to correlation, regression, and SEM.

Results - All store selection attributes were verified as having a positive influence on the relationship quality. Although the store selection attributes were verified as exerting a positive influence on the relationship quality, according to the verification result of the mediating effect, consumer value was verified to be influenced only by the relationship quality instead of by the store selection attributes.

Conclusion - As a result of path analysis on the proposed model after modification, it was verified that only product factor had a statistically significant positive influence and that social value was completely mediating between relationship quality and emotional value. It may be highlighted that the MEC theory concept would be applicable to the cause-and-effect relationship model.

Keywords : Store Selection Attribute, Value Pursuit, Means-end Chain Theory, Behavioral Plasticity Theory, Discount Store.

JEL Classifications: : M10, M31, M37, N75, O24.

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1. Introduction

Studies on general supermarkets[1] have turned out to be 839 cases of degree theses, 481 cases of domestic academic journal papers and 529 cases of published books when searched through the Research Information Service System (RISS) on the internet as "Discount store". Briefly viewing the studies that have been published recently in relevant academic journals, it can be seen that a variety of papers from diversified academic societies are being published on the subjects of the store selection attributes and customer satisfaction (Byun, 2012), the service environment and store loyalty (Choi, 2012), the shopping experience value and store loyalty (Hwang et al., 2012), the purchase of private brand (PB) products (Han & Chung, 2011), the comparison of satisfaction between traditional markets and general supermarkets (Hong, 2012), the marketing communication and loyalty (Yang & Ju, 2012) and so on, and such a trend up to now is verified to be that those studies are divided largely into those on general supermarkets in the hardware aspects of physical environment, etc., studies in the software aspects of employees, marketing techniques, etc. and the comparative studies with other distribution channels.

Among many others, the reasons for a number of researchers to be paying attention to general supermarkets are that, first, they are playing a crucial role as a domestic distribution channel in both aspects of sales revenue and scale (Yang & Ju, 2012); second, their influence is substantial upon the consumption behavior of the relevant small and medium enterprises supplying products to general supermarkets as well as that of other consumers; and third, the social indications due to the negative effect upon traditional markets or local small business-owners and the evils of regional unbalanced development, etc. as well as a variety of the government's diverse regulatory policies against such are becoming an issue.

According to Kim et al. (2012), they reported about regulation as follows: Currently, regulation for sales on large retailers in

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1) A large scale discount store had been decided to be denoted as a major supermarket from July 1, 2006, by the Ministry of commerce, Industry and Energy, however, in the report of 'A View on the Unification of Terms on Retailing Businesses' reported by Kwon et al. (2007) of the Korea Distribution Science Association, they were decided to be unified as 'general supermarket.'

the nation have background: First, the Act on Development of Distribution Industry nominated traditional market and/or traditional market district as traditional commerce conservation area to give limitation to registration or to give conditions of large stores, direct stores and/or franchise SSM for five years not exceeding 1 kilometer from traditional market to protect traditional markets. Second, direct SSM and/or franchise type of SSM with more than 51% of large business share shall postpone opening and sales business according to the Act on Industry Cooperation between Large Business and Small Business to discuss business with small business firstly when small business applies to business control: And, SSM can be given limitation of sales and/or time by discussion and/or compulsory arbitration, when necessary. However, consumers are still reluctant to accept regulation for sales such as compulsory off-day as well as limited sales hours to produce a lot of social disputes. Consumers may be ready to accept convenience of regulation for sales from ethical standards of social order, and they are not likely to accept regulation for sales on large retailers subject to mutual cooperation and win-win growth.

In this study, just as the researcher makes efforts to find out the clues about the traditional market, it is attempted to unfold the efforts, in different perspectives, for identifying the leading variables of such factors as the relevant quality or loyalty which are the outcome variables for activating the general supermarket as an important distribution channel with regard to the general supermarkets whose business is being controlled substantially by the government, while pros and cons are being continued. Particularly in this study, it is attempted to identify the clues for the value promotion that can be operated as a consumers' motive for activating general supermarkets, by reconstructing each of the variables that have been analyzed in the meantime through the means-end chain theory, while shedding new light on the consumer value that have been indicated as an important factor in the study on general supermarkets.

2. Theoretical Background

As reported in Yang's other study, the theory of means-end chain model (MEC) was suggested by Reynolds & Gutman (1984) in the middle of the 1970s, they have an interest in consumer value and the theoretical foundation has been completed, MEC describe how to connect of products and services with consumer values (ter Hofstede et al., 1998). When Gutman (1982) suggested the MEC, he gave two assumptions of MEC: First, the value could play important role at induced behavior. Second, customers classified various kinds of products to meet their values and to simplify selection process. According to ter Hofstede et al. (1998), they assumed that hierarchical cognitive structure that product and service attributes connected benefit and consumer values had relations with products and consumers to be related to consumers' cognitive structure, and the val-

ues meant ultimate goals (Rokeach, 1973) of the customers.

Many researchers (e.g. Gutman, 1982; Peter & Olson, 1993; Reynolds & Olson, 2001; Reynolds et al., 1995) who study the MEC commonly argued that product attributes of MEC gave consumers benefit to consumers' personal values, and the value that an individual relied upon him or her was aimed at governing of motives and/or desire to be final goal of life (Reynolds & Olson, 2001). The attributes, benefit and value were known to obtain at laddering, that is to say, in-depth interview (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988) to have MEC by various kinds of laddering. According to Grunert et al. (2001), the laddering had three stages, that is to say, selection of products and/or services at in-depth interview, discovering of concept that respondents could describe and differentiate a given product and/or service, and connection of attributes, benefit and values.

This study was focused on structure of cognitive connection of MEC. In other words, the study investigated model by connection of attributes, benefit and values of the variables by self-report questionnaire. At examination of MEC system, in-depth interview that varied depending upon an interviewer's skill and/or analysis ability could be supplemented. This study selected attributes of general supermarket, and adopt relationship quality that was perceived quality, and not only social value but also emotional value that was consumer's value was selected to set up hierarchial relation of MEC by causal model of attributes, results and values and to verify effectiveness of MEC. The study verified appropriateness of the structural model to inspect optimization based on theoretical background and to give approach for easy obtaining of knowledge on the consumers based on laddering.

In this study, attributes of general supermarket were based on store types that were standards at consumers' selection and evaluation of stores and to be factors of store images (Shim & Kotsiopulos, 1993). Osman (1993) reported that a customer's patronage behavior of a store was made to select store, and consumers could experience various kinds of marketing stimulus at visit to stores to decide upon consumers' patronage behavior (Hutchenson & Moutinho, 1998). The results of previous studies can be expected that the some factors help to improve relations. Specifically, Osman (1993) reported that he store selection attributes could decide upon patronage behavior, and Prendergast & Man (2002) reported that significant influence upon not only revisit intention but also word of mouth intention to help improve relations. According to these ques, in this study, firstly, we selected Chun & Park (2010)'s sub factors of store selection attributes consisted of product, services, advertising and store atmosphere.

The relationship quality was selected at consequences that was second stage of MEC. The relationship quality that indicates customer satisfaction with desire concerning relations (Hening-Thurau, 2000) is defined to be customer's cognition on satisfaction with expectation, forecast, goals and desire (Jarvelin & Letinen, 1996). As consumers who are not satisfied with purchasing and consuming of product do not buy, so relationship

quality shall be low at no satisfaction with the general super-market that consumers visit. As reported by Roberts et al. (2003), customers who are satisfied with performance in the past of products and/or service providers for a long time shall rely upon outcome in the future of products and/or service pro-viders to keep relations.

Not only social value but also emotional value was adopted at last stage of MEC's value. According to Gutman (1982) who proposed MEC, the value of MEC is said to be Rokeach (1973)'s terminal value of goal of human life. This study did not adopt value of Rokeach (1973)'s suggestion, because he de-fined instrumental value was used to complete terminal value. This study made structure of the variables by applying view points of MEC to be difficult to find out various kinds of con-ditions under current conditions of traditional market so that dual values of consumers were needed. Recently as a policy meas-ure, the government has been pouring such regulations as con-cerned with the business regulation, mandatory store-closing, re-striction on store-opening, etc., and when it is assumed that consumers in such a social phenomenon will pursue only the fi-nal value that becomes the goal of human life, it is because of the difficulties in presenting the solutions for issues on phenomena. The social value of consumers' values composed extensively by Sheth et al. (1991) is defined to be able to ele-vate consumers' values as well as social recognition, and emo-tional value is defined to be value that service creates move-ment and has influence upon emotional status.

Up to the challenges for the MEC is because the value can be dependent variable at casual relation model. In other words, MEC has put the value at the highest level to let consumers look for value that is thought to be important, while structured casual relation looks for causes that can elevate or lower values. Until now these phenomenon, the value was used to be either antecedents or mediating variable, but it was not used role of dependent variable at precedent studies. If we approach from the point of view of the value, it will be able to solve these problems. Because the value(or values) of the individual (or communities) is fundamental conviction, and specific behav-ior(or way of being) is thought to be remaining better than any other behavior (Im, 2008), and an approach from point of view of users' social values is able to elevate others' recognition and/or their own images by using products and/or services. When accessed in this context, emotional value is said to be made by not only sensual pleasure of products and/or services but also products and/or services themselves.

In this study, attributes-consequences-value model of MEC was used to make causal relation model of store selection at-tributes- relationship quality - value (social value & emotional value) to investigate relations and effects between them and to inspect MEC concept by variables of self-report questionnaire. Research model and hypotheses based on precedent studies were illustrated in <Figure 1>.
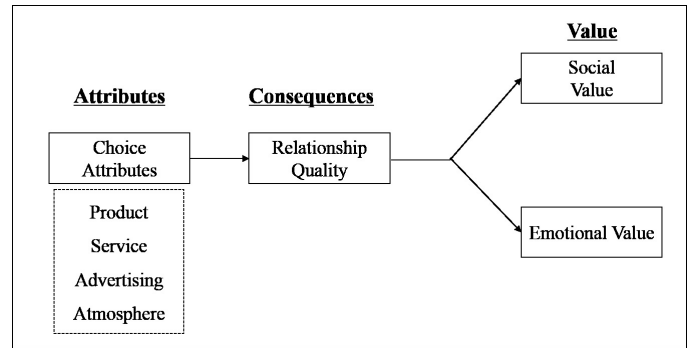
<Figure 1> Research Model based on MEC

Hypothesis 1. The choice attributes of general supermarket has positive influence upon relationship quality.

Hypothesis 1-1. The product of general supermarket has pos-itive influence upon relationship quality.
Hypothesis 1-2. The service degree of general supermarket has positive influence upon relationship quality.
Hypothesis 1-3. The advertising of general supermarket has positive influence upon relationship quality.
Hypothesis 1-4. The atmosphere of general supermarket has positive influence upon relationship quality.

The study examined mediating effects of relationship quality between store selection attributes and values. The hypotheses were as follows:

Hypothesis 2. The relationship quality is mediated between choice attributes of general supermarket and social value

Hypothesis 2-1. The relationship quality is mediated between product and social value.
Hypothesis 2-2. The relationship quality is mediated between service and social value.
Hypothesis 2-3. The relationship quality is mediated between advertising and social value.
Hypothesis 2-4. The relationship quality is mediated between atmosphere and social value.

Hypothesis 3. The relationship quality is mediated between choice attributes of general supermarket and emotional value

Hypothesis 3-1. The relationship quality is mediated between product and emotional value.
Hypothesis 3-2. The relationship quality is mediated between service and emotional value.
Hypothesis 3-3. The relationship quality is mediated between advertising and emotional value.
Hypothesis 3-4. The relationship quality is mediated between

atmosphere and emotional value.

3. Methodologies

3.1. Research Designs and Data Collection

In this study, 202 copies of effective questionnaires were used by Yang & Ju (2012)'s data. The participants consisted of 93 male (46.0%) and 109 female (54.0%), and 130 married (64.4%) and 72 unmarried (35.6%). The male were 37.7 years old on average (SD=8.91), and the female were 36.8 years old (SD=9.30) on average, and 60 participants (29.7%) were less than 30 years old, and 61 participants (30.2%) were 30 to 40 years older, and 81 participants (40.1%) were 40 years old or more.

3.2. Methods

The following self-report measures were used. Specifically, attributes of general supermarket was measured each 3 item of product, services, advertising, and store atmosphere, likert 5-point scale based on Yoo et al. (1998), relationship quality was measured 4 item, likert 5-point scale based on Oliver (1993) and Yin (2002). Not only social value but also emotional value was measured each 4 item, likert 5-point scale based on Shet et al. (1991), Sweeney & Soutar (2001), and Wang et al. (2000).

4. Empirical Analysis

4.1. Reliability and Validity

In this study, Cronbach α was used to test reliability and to evaluate internal consistency of measuring items. According to Nunnally (1978), Cronbach α coefficient should exceed 0.7. In this study, Cronbach α was 0.789 or more to be ensure the reliability except for the

product. Product's Cronbach α was 0.519, but According to Rho (2011) suggested that if Cronbach α coefficient should exceed 0.5 than have an appropriate level of reliability. Analyses of the results for the validation of the variables, the confirmatory factor analysis was completed with maximum likelihood estimation. The results of factor loading of each factor exceeded 0.5 to have construct validity, and AVE (average variance extracted) of each variable exceeded 0.5 to have convergent validity. These results are shown in <Table 1>.

<Table 1> Reliability and Validity

Variable	Sub-factor	Final item	Cronbach's α	Construct Reliability	AVE
Choice Attributes	Product	2	0.519	0.707	0.552
	Service	2	0.873	0.883	0.792
	Advertising	3	0.789	0.824	0.610
	Atmosphere	3	0.908	0.930	0.817
Relationship Quality		4	0.868	0.914	0.730
Value	Social value	4	0.872	0.908	0.713
	Emotional value	4	0.936	0.930	0.769

4.2. Correlation Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was done to investigate relations and direction of the variables by correlation analysis. The mean, standard deviations, and correlation matrix are shown in <Table 2>.

<Table 2> Mean, standard deviations and correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Product	(0.552)						
2. Service	0.083	(0.792)					
3. Advertising	0.071	0.504**	(0.610)				
4. Atmosphere	0.184**	0.439**	0.650**	(0.817)			
5. R.Q	0.561**	0.277**	0.289**	0.344**	(0.730)		
6. S.V	0.482**	0.218**	0.140*	0.289**	0.692**	(0.713)	
7. E.V	0.320**	0.008	0.043	0.201**	0.421**	0.523**	(0.769)
Mean	3.26	4.51	4.29	4.23	3.69	3.42	2.86
S.D	0.67	0.59	0.65	0.69	0.61	0.67	0.89

Notes) * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, R.Q: Relationship Quality, S.V: Social Value, E.V: Emotional Value/ AVE is marked in ( ).

As a result of the correlation analysis, it was verified that there was no significant statistical relationship between product and service ($r = 0.083$, $p = 0.242$), product and advertising ($r = 0.071$, $p = 0.314$), service and emotional value ($r = 0.008$, $p = 0.914$), advertising and emotional value ($r = 0.043$, $p = 0.543$), respectively. In particular, it was a somewhat unexpected result that the factor of the service and advertising provided by general supermarkets did not influence the emotional value of consumers. Considering that Sheth et al. (1991) have defined the emotional value as the value obtained when a certain good or service evokes emotions or influences an emotional state, the respondents of this study may understand that, first, there could be no relationship with the emotional value because consumers are already getting a certain level of satisfaction with the service and advertising being provided by general supermarkets, second, the actual service and advertising do not influence the emotional value just like the outcome of this analysis.

4.3. Hypothesis Test

A regression analysis was done with control of gender, marriage and age to test the relationship between sub factors of store selection attributes and relationship quality: The product (β = .579, p < .01), service (β = .351, p < .01), advertising (β = .324, p < .01) and store atmosphere (β = .354, p < .01) had positive influence upon relationship quality. So, all of hypothesis 1-1, 1-2, 1-3 and 1-4 were supported. A multiple regression analysis was done to investigate effect of factors upon relationship quality to have positive influence in order of product (β = .527, p < .01) only.

According to Baron & Kenny(1986)'s three-step mediated regression analysis was done to investigate mediating effects with control of demographic factors. The results are shown in <Table 3>. The relationship quality was fully mediated the relationship between product, services, advertising and store atmosphere and social value, respectively. Also, the relationship quality was fully mediated the relationship between product, store atmosphere and emotional value, respectively. So, hypothesis 2-1 to 2-4, 3-1, 3-4 was supported, but hypothesis 3-2, 3-3 was not supported, respectively.
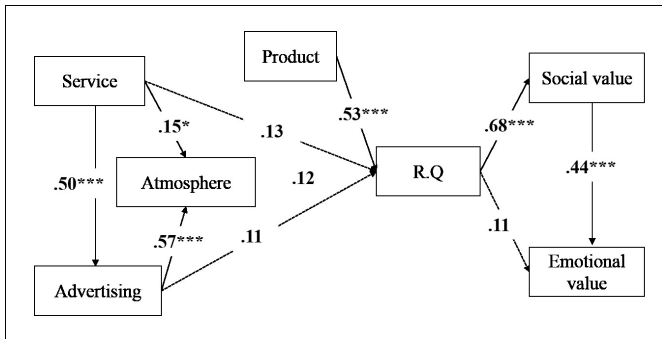
<Table 3> The results of Mediation Effect

Independent variable(IV)	Step	Mediation Variables (MV)	R^2	F
Product°	1(β1)	.579**	.498	38.851**
	2(β2)	.480**		
	3(β3,IV)	.118		
	3(β4,MV)	.625**		
Service°	1(β1)	.288**	.491	37.795**
	2(β2)	.245**		
	3(β3,IV)	.050		
	3(β4,MV)	.678**		
Advertising°	1(β1)	.324**	.491	37.822**
	2(β2)	.175*		
	3(β3,IV)	-.054		
	3(β4,MV)	.707**		
Atmosphere°	1(β1)	.354**	.493	38.093**
	2(β2)	.306**		
	3(β3,IV)	.070		
	3(β4,MV)	.667**		
Product°°	1(β1)	.579**	.199	9.711**
	2(β2)	.320**		
	3(β3,IV)	.114		
	3(β4,MV)	.355**		
Atmosphere°°	1(β1)	.354**	.196	9.552**
	2(β2)	.221**		
	3(β3,IV)	.083		
	3(β4,MV)	.391**		

Notes) * p<0.5, ** P<0.01, Dependent Variable: ° Social value, °° emotional value

The results of the structural model of shown in <Figure 1> indicated fit indices: χ^2 = 222.569, degree of freedom= 15, provability level= .000, GFI = .759, AGFI = .550, NFI = .543, RMR = .092, did not adequate the criteria for indicators of the structural equation analysis. As, we set additional paths based on theoretical background for the adequacy of the optimal model. Specifically, additional path that atmosphere has influence upon service and advertising of general supermarket, and advertising has influence upon service, and social value has influence upon emotional value. respectively.

Theoretical and phenomenological evidence were as follows: The reality is that the general supermarkets in our country are making a lot of investment in the store-related physical environment unlike those in overseas countries. Such an aspect may be identified from the outcomes such as the department store-like display, provision of a culture center, etc., and there's a high possibility that the many studies such as Bitner (1992), Molina et al. (2009) and Bloemer & Odrkerken-Shcröder (2002) claiming the importance of the physical environment may exert a positive(+) influence relationship quality that is perceived by consumers. In addition, in the case of a service as provided by a general supermarket, an additional path has been constituted that the service provided by a general supermarket will influence the store atmosphere and advertisement on the basis of the claim of Parasuraman et al. (1988) who insisted that the service for customers would enhance the store loyalty and ultimately become the core factor for creating a successful retail business, and also on the basis of the claim of Molina et al. (2009) who insisted that the tangible aspects like parking space, packaging of purchased items, etc. and the intangible factors like the physical environment of the store inside would be the methods for providing service to customers.

In addition, consumers are obtaining information through the trademarks or advertising about the store, whereas it is being reported that when there exists the loyalty for store, the more the influence on advertising increases, the more the loyalty and purchasing tend to increase (Raj, 1982). Such a phenomenon makes it possible to verify that general supermarkets are fully exposing themselves in order to maximize the effect of the comfortable store atmosphere in which they invest by themselves. Therefore, an additional path has been constituted expecting that advertisement will influence the promotion of store atmosphere. In this study, the value of a merchandise was expected to exert influence only on the relationship quality, and the reason for such was that consumers' basic evaluation on the provided merchandise itself was expected to exist because the products from a general supermarket were provided in the form of bundled packages as for the products of a private brand (PB) or an ordinary brand.

Notes) * p< .05, ** p< .01, *** p< .001, R.Q: Relationship Quality

<Figure 2> Modified Model and Results

From the different perspective, the social value is likely to have influence upon emotional value according to Brockner (1988)'s behavioral plasticity theory (BPT). BPT that is conceptional base to understand role of self-esteem makes change of personal behavior by external environment, in particular, social cues. BPT can be classified into two references: First, individuals do social comparison to act specifically. Individuals rely upon social bases that govern their own belief and behavior, and they do social comparison to be free from uneasiness on properness of belief and/or behavior. The factors that have influence upon uncertainty of individuals may have influence at comparison process. The traditional market revival that is a nationwide movement is likely to be influenced at social comparison on consumers' selection process (if not, process prior to selection). Second, self-diagnosticity, self-diagnostics that controls effects of negative feedback to let individuals compare feedback with ego concept and to follow others' attitudes and desire by recognition about a variety of the government's diverse regulatory policies and self-display desire and to increase and/or decrease consumers' emotional values.

As shown above, the results of the modified model indicated fit indices: χ^2 = 27.794, degree of freedom = 11, provability level = .003, GFI = .961, AGFI = .901, NFI = .945, RMR = .033. The adequacy of the structural equation models was evaluated on the criteria of overall fit with the data, and it was significant at χ^2 test that verified difference with model suggested. The path of all of the models was illustrated in <Figure 2>, and shown in <Table 4>.

<Table 4> Path results of modified model

Paths	Estimate	S.E	t-value	p-value
Relationship Quality ← Product	.532	.050	9.534	.000
Relationship Quality ← Service	.130	.067	1.951	.051
Atmosphere ← Service	.149	.072	2.441	.015
Advertising ← Service	.504	.068	8.263	.000
Atmosphere ← Advertising	.575	.065	9.401	.000
Relationship Quality ← Advertising	.112	.071	1.441	.150

Relationship Quality ← Atmosphere	.125	.065	1.671	.095
Social value ← Relationship Quality	.684	.057	13.295	.000
Emotional value ← Relationship Quality	.112	.121	1.366	.172
Emotional value ← Social value	.441	.109	5.352	.000

<Table 5> Results of mediating effect by additional path

Independent variable	Step	Mediating variable	R^2	F
Relationship Quality	1(β1)	0.691**	0.292	16.183**
	2(β2)	0.419**		
	3(β3, IV)	*0.110*		
	3(β4, MV)	0.447**		

Notes) * p< .05, ** p< .01, Dependent variable: Emotional value, Mediating variable: Social value

According to Baron & Kenny (1986)'s three-step mediated regression analysis was done to test mediating effect of store atmosphere the relationship between services and relationship quality that was produced at adding of path between service and store atmosphere. Also, to test mediating effect of social value the relationship between emotional value and relationship quality. These results were shown in <Table 5>.

5. Discussion and Limitations

In this study, just like the effort that has been made to find out the clues concerning the activation of the traditional markets through the MEC, as for the general supermarkets whose business is being controlled substantially by the government, while pros and cons are being continued, in order to activate them as an important distribution channel, it was attempted to identify the clues for the value promotion that may be operated as a consumers' motive by shedding new light on the consumer value as well as by reconstructing each of the variables that had been analyzed in the meantime through the means-end chain theory.

As a result of the study, there are at least four important managerial or theoretical implications from this study. First, all of the product, service, advertisement and store atmosphere, that had been selected as the store selection attributes of consumers with regard to the general supermarkets, were verified to have positive influence on the relationship quality, and among these factors, only the product (β = .527, p < .01) was verified to have a significantly positive (+) influence. Such a result provides an implication that there exists a problem in the effectiveness and efficiency of the diversified investment in luxurious store atmosphere, excessive advertisement and service on the part of the general supermarkets in our country unlike those in

foreign countries. In other words, a general supermarket is, due to its nature, a retail store under the concept that service provision is minimized by promoting self-service through merchandise assortment (Yang & Ju, 2012), while warehouse management cost is cut down by reducing inventory through making efficient demand forecasts, and the saved portion of its operating cost is returned to consumers by utilizing the labor force of non-regular workers, whereas implications are given that the marketing strategy of the general supermarkets in our country is not achieving any major effect in the perspective of consumers, while it has been focused primarily on price break and service improvement, advertising, and improvement of physical environment up until now. Therefore, in order for those general supermarkets to secure their competitiveness, continued efforts should be made to obtain new achievements through modifying the natural core management value of a general supermarket (Yang & Ju, 2012) while securing high quality merchandises, diverse merchandise assortment and so on. Second, even though the store selection attributes had been verified to exert positive (+) influence on the relationship quality, according to the verification result of the mediating effect, the consumer value was verified to be influenced only by the relationship quality rather than by the store selection attributes. Such a result is a somewhat unexpected one and a careful approach should be needed. It is because the relationship quality is promoted, according to a number of relevant studies such as Hutchenson & Moutnho (1998), James et al. (1976), Kotler (1997), and Shim & Kotsiopulos (1992), traditionally by the variables of store attributes such as the experience of diverse marketing stimulus and favorable images, and as a result, a different result was drawn, which is quite different from the study result that it influences the store ego behavior and loyalty. Therefore, it is predictable that such a result is providing an implication that there exist other factors whereby consumers' relationship quality as to general supermarkets may be promoted. In other words, additional considerations are to be required with regard to such factors as the trust factor suggested by Grègoire & Fisher (2008) which is emerging recently as an improving factor of relationship quality, the fairness factor for general supermarkets (Brockner et al., 1992; Grègoire & Fisher, 2008; Huefner & Hunt, 2000), the negative emotional factor caused by service failure (Finkel et al., 2002; McCullough et al., 2003; Ward & Ostrom, 2006), etc. Also, apart from the above results, it is notable that the relationship quality was verified to be not influencing the consumers' emotional value, as a result of an analysis on whether the consumers' emotional value is mediated by the relationship quality with regard to each of service and advertising. According to Boztepe (2007), the emotional value means the joy or pleasure which is the emotional benefit given by the product to the people interacting with the product, whereas Desmet & Hekkert (2007) said that the emotional value originates from emotional experience and by defining it as the psychological experience which is the joy experienced by sensory organs as well as the experience that is relevant to one's own personality or character, they predicted that the emotional

value would not only be influenced directly by the positive experience on the factors of store selection attributes but also it would be mediated by the high relationship quality. About such a prediction, the outcome is that it is because only a sole influence is in effect. Therefore, the implication here is that an additional study should be needed about the mediating variable that could enhance the emotional value of consumers. Third, as a result of the path analysis on the proposed model after modification, with regard to the relationship quality of the general supermarkets in our country, it was verified that only the product factor had a statistically significant positive (+) influence and also that the social value was completely mediating between the relationship quality and the emotional value. Such a result is giving the implication that, as indicated earlier, consumers' value recognition, trust and satisfaction with the products are needed by the important factor for strengthening the competitiveness of general supermarkets. Therefore, it will be necessary for general supermarkets to actively provide high quality products and those suited to consumers' needs.

Also, it is being regarded as a very important implication that the BPT is verified to be applicable to the consumer value of general supermarkets. In particular, the role of the social value is judged to be very important. In the meantime, a number of scholars such as Bourdieu (1984), Goffman (1974), and Veblen (2001) have revealed that people's product consumption is being done for creating a relative status within their social connection or they are interacting with the product to obtain a social status and maintain their dignity. Also, Baudrillard (2006) said that consumption is a method for people to communicate with each other while indicating the symbolic role of such a communication as an action shared and transmitted by members of the society. Asseal (1992) has emphasized the symbolic meaning that expresses the social meaning of a product, and indicated that, in case of the consumers who regard it to be important, they give a symbolic meaning to the product beyond the physical attributes of the product, thus a substantial influence may be exerted on the product purchasing. In other words, implications are given that there could be a high possibility for consumers to neglect their consumption through super centers being caused by the behavior of those super centers that have been resisting to all sorts of government-imposed regulations against general supermarkets during the recent past. Therefore, general supermarkets will be in need of a strategy that will enable the active provision of the opportunities for accompanied growth while participating positively in the social logic of win-win approaches. Lastly, it may be pointed out that the concept of the MEC would be applicable to the cause and effect relationship model. The MEC is a concept with a hierarchical structure, and in the meantime, scholars have been insisting that the most important value perceived by consumers can be found out only through the laddering methodology which is one of the in-depth interview methods, and a number of studies on this have been published as have been presented previously. However, in this study, the possibility for acquiring information has been verified with regard

to the information on the consumer-related knowledge such as value by suggesting the connection line of attribute-benefit-value through the cause and effect relationship model and also by presenting an optimized model on the basis of phenomenal, theoretical background.

There are at least several potential limitations in this study that need to be considered: First, the subject of the study was consumers at metropolitan area to be difficult to generalize the findings. So, further studies shall expand regions and/or subject to investigate difference of influence of general supermarkets between Seoul and local areas. Second, hierarchial connection of attributes, consequences and values of MEC was converted to be causal relation model, and methodology of the study that thought much of values of MEC was short of academic base. Further studies shall classify consumers into individuals and group to investigate hierarchial causal relation. Further studies shall investigate consumer values again to test various kinds of values to overcome difference of value pursuit. Lastly, the study made use of self-report questionnaire to have problem of hindsight bias and to be based on cross-sectional study. So, further studies shall discover and develop objective scale and investigate by longitudinal study to overcome problems of cross-sectional study.

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