

INDIVIDUALS' CHOICE BEHAVIOUR IN WAITING SITUATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This paper shows that the propensity to interrupt and/or to not engage again into particular waiting situations is not solely depending on the actual time spent waiting. The examination indicates that individuals perceive value resulting from both the time spent waiting and the purpose of engaging into the focal waiting situation. Further, customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the focal waiting situation can arise as a consequence of perceived value for waiting and/or perceived value of the purpose of engaging into waiting. The propensity to interrupt and/or to not engage again into the focal waiting situation is modelled as choice behaviour accounting for perceived waiting time value and customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with waiting time.

INTRODUCTION

Individuals are concerned about time and their use of available time. In services situations individuals are confronted with various types of waiting time. Waiting time in service situations includes the time spent waiting for a particular service to happen (*pre-process waiting time*) and the time spent waiting during the consumption of the service (*in-process waiting time*). This paper will focus on *pre-process waiting time* of special waiting situations. Especially, the choice behaviour of individuals to continue or to interrupt pre-process waiting time.

The propensity to interrupt and/or to not engage again into waiting situations is impacting on customer switching behaviour which in turn is affecting market share and profitability of service firms. Yet, there has been little academic analysis in the marketing field of various time related aspects. The analysis of actual time with regard to service related issues has been analysed in varying degree. Some research studies analysed the impact of perceived time in consumer research (Graham, 1981; Hornik, 1984; Guy, Rittenburg, and Hawes, 1994; McDonald, 1994), the effects of perceived time in the services area and its effects on various service characteristics (Kellaris & Kent, 1992; Green, Lehmann, & Schmitt, 1996) or in particular the effects of perceived waiting time in services relationships (Maister, 1985; Larson, 1987; Katz, Larson B., & Larson R., 1991; Clemmer & Schneider, 1993; Taylor, 1994; Hui & Tse, 1996). Yet, there seem to be some opportunities for clarification. Specifically, a model will be presented assessing waiting time related issues incorporating perceived value of waiting time and customer satisfaction with waiting time.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Within the model the construct of perceived waiting time value is applied and it is proposed that customers form *should expectations* on waiting time and perceive waiting time. *Should expectations* on waiting time are based on information available on waiting time and its associated benefits. The information arises from prior experience and knowledge concerning the particular waiting time circumstances and other comparable and different waiting time situations. Perceived waiting time is the cognisance of time and associated benefits with regard to the rationalisation of waiting. Hence, waiting time results into immediate benefits/losses and subsequent benefits. It must be distinguished between benefits perceived with regard to predicted needs and latent needs. The subsequent benefits can result from the service that caused the waiting time. Waiting time benefits account for functional, emotional and social benefits. Perceived waiting time value is experienced by comparing perceived waiting time benefits with expected immediate waiting time benefits and accounting for subsequent waiting time benefits. While expectations and positive confirmation yield perceived waiting time value, disconfirmation and perceived losses discount perceived waiting time value.

Hypothesis 1: As should expectations about predicted immediate and/or subsequent benefits of the waiting time increase, the perceived waiting time value increases.

Hypothesis 2: As should expectations of predicted immediate waiting time benefits are higher than perceived waiting time benefits, the perceived waiting time value decreases.

Customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with waiting time arises when the focal individual perceives that his/her ratio of perceived gained value resulting from waiting to value, which the individual has input for waiting, is proportionate to that of the other party. Thus, when input values for waiting are disproportionately higher for one party, satisfaction of waiting time increases as that party's perceived gained value increases relative to those of the other party, and decreases as the perceived gained value with regard to waiting decreases relative to those of the other. In the case of waiting situations, satisfaction can be modelled as the consequence of perceived value of waiting, with customers experiencing higher levels of satisfaction with the waiting time as the ratio of perceived values of waiting to input values for waiting increases. Hence, a higher ratio of perceived values of waiting to input values for waiting is resulting into a higher degree of customer satisfaction and into a lower degree of customer dissatisfaction with regard to the time spent waiting. Customer satisfaction with the time spent waiting is related to perceived equity and customer dissatisfaction is resulting from perceived inequity.

Hypothesis 3: As the ratio of perceived value of waiting time to input values for time spent waiting increases, customer satisfaction with waiting time increases.

Hypothesis 4: As the ratio of perceived value of waiting time to input values for time spent waiting of the customer exceeds the ratio of perceived value to input values of the service provider, customer dissatisfaction for time spent waiting decreases.

Waiting situations can be viewed as exchange incidents including various parties. In this sense, waiting takes place as long the party, spending time for waiting, perceives that it will be better off (or at least not worse off) than before having spent time for waiting. Consequently, individual's engagement into waiting behaviour is caused by the perceived value and level of CS/D resulting from the time spent waiting, with lower perceived values of time spent waiting and lower levels of CS/D with regard to waiting leading to a higher propensity of interrupting the waiting situation and/or not engaging again into waiting for the particular matter.

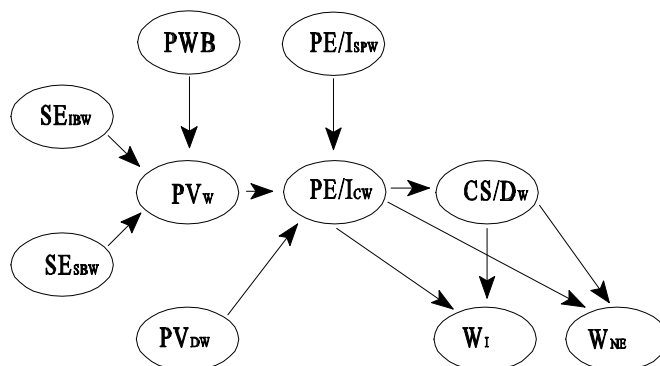
Hypothesis 5: As the perceived value of time spent waiting and/or level of customer satisfaction with waiting decreases, the propensity of customer interrupting the waiting situation increases.

Hypothesis 6: As the perceived value of time spent waiting and/or level of customer satisfaction with waiting decreases, the propensity of customer not engaging again into waiting for the particular matter increases.

The model determining the impact of perceived value of time spent waiting and CS/D with waiting time on the propensity of customer interrupting waiting situations and/or not engaging again into waiting for the focal matter is illustrated in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1

A model for the propensity to interrupt and/or to not engage again into waiting



E_{IBW}	= Should expectations about immediate waiting benefits
SE_{SBW}	= Should expectations about subsequent waiting benefits
PW_B	= Perceived waiting benefits
PV_W	= Perceived waiting time value
PV_{DW}	= Perceived devoted value
PE/I_{CW}	= Perceived level of equity/inequity for the customer
PE/I_{SPW}	= Perceived level of equity/inequity for the service provider
CS/D_W	= Customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with waiting time
W_I	= Propensity of interrupting the waiting situation
W_{NE}	= Propensity of not engaging again into waiting for the particular matter

OUTLOOK

The earlier developed model incorporates a sufficient analysis on waiting time related issues and identifies the key constructs to be evaluated. An appropriate empirical study is currently designed and will be conducted in the near future. The next step lies in integrating the waiting time related issues into services situations and in developing service specific recommendations.

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