



Continuity of retail therapy of fashion product shopping - A daily diary analysis -

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Introduction and Research Question

Since the late 2000s, healing which is comforts and heals the tiredness has been emerging as a consumer trend, from economic recession and social relationships. This is emerging through consumers' attitudes about their present happiness. Previous studies have explained that consumers can feel better through shopping, and introduced concepts such as 'Retail Therapy' or 'Therapy Shopping' (Kang & Johnson, 2011). Atalay and Meloy (2011) tested the effects of retail therapy on the improvement of negative mood like sadness relief. However, previous researches on retail therapy only focused on temporary changes about before and after purchasing products neglecting the continuity of post-purchase therapy effects. Therefore, this study analyzes the participants' diary for a week to find the mechanism of retail therapy effect and repeated routine.

Method and Procedures

Diary analysis is one of the most actively used methods for mood and emotional research. To understand the process of mood change according to the changes of situation and time, emotions should be repeatedly and frequently measured. Thus, diary analysis can be used as an effective method for exploring emotional processes (Stone, Smyth, Pickering, & Schwartz, 1996). With advances in electronics and information and communications technology, researchers have been able to require participants to instantly record the events, situations, and psychological conditions they experienced using electronic data entry tools (e.g. portable electronic devices).

This study used an electronic weekly diary record for data collecting. In the preliminary study, 10 women aged of 20s and 30s were found to experience a retail therapy in shopping process, and they were asked to write a diary for a week including the day of shopping. In order to keep the recorded time to be constant, the researcher sent an alarm to the participant through mobile instant message at the same time every day. Participants responded by writing a daily diary about their mood or behavior. The diary consists at least 5 lines of writing based on a MS Word file including daily work and shopping experience. To help with understanding how to write a diary, we provided some guidelines and examples. "Daily work" means regular daily diary, and it describes impressive events during daily life. The "Shopping experience" included the diary about the first day shopping experience and another shopping experience that occurred during the test week. The description of the shopping experience also includes when, how and with whom the shopping was conducted, and talks about fashion products that were purchased or interested. In order to confirm

the continuity of retail therapy experience, we analyzed the shopping process from the diary and the changes of mood relating to the experience of fashion products.

Results and Discussion

Most participants positively mentioned about the shopping process in the diary on the day of shopping which is the 1st day of recording. Participants expressed their satisfaction about experiencing deviations in shopping places and from daily life, discovering and purchasing desired products or socializing with friends or family. The current work documents that a bad mood lead to greater purchase and consumption for self-treats. However, it also provides evidence that the consumption of self-treats can be strategically motivated.

The continuity of retail therapy effects through fashion product shopping experiences was maintained by participants' own therapy experience. The repeated routine of retail therapy started with the joy through shopping process itself, followed by coordinating and planning how to wear with the purchased product, and it maintained until the actually wearing. In order to sustain the therapy effect, participants searched additional products, planned extra shopping and actual shopping activities were appeared. These behaviors are to maximize the continuity of desire to repeat the positive experiences. The continuity of retail therapy effect through weekly diary represents a specific routine of mood change and behavior. On the 1st day diary, the most uplifted mood observed through wearing and styling the purchased products, and it seemed to gradually decrease over time. However, depending on whether additional searching or purchasing behavior is occurred or not, the differences of continuity of retail therapy were appeared by participants. If another stimulus is given when the continuity is started to decrease, a new retail therapy effect routine begins. Through exploring new products and purchasing the desired products, the positive mood are also increased. Regardless of the number of wearing and utilization of the product, participants were focusing on 'consumption for self' and 'self-satisfied consumption'

Previous studies have examined retail therapy effects through quantitative data confined to instantaneous effects post-purchasing. Compared with this, our study is meaningful in that it confirms the long-term continuity of retail therapy effect and finds repeated routine through qualitative data. Consumer's positive response post-shopping is one of the essential factors to lead for steady visit. Therefore, it is important for companies to understand the process and continuity of the retail therapy experience. This result can be reflected in the development of services that promote therapy effects, and it is expected to help identifying factors that promotes the consumer's positive revisiting and repurchasing. In addition, it is meaningful to make the consumer to feel happy by keeping positive effect of consumption for a long time.

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