CONVENIENCE: DEFINITION, STRUCTURE, AND APPLICATION

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Despite widespread interest in convenience in marketing, researchers have not defined convenience and explored the multidimensionality of the construct. This conceptual paper presents a proposed definition of convenience and a proposed structure for the construct to guide research and to suggest proper application of the term in discussing classes of goods and services. Hypotheses to guide future research are also presented.

INTRODUCTION

Megatrends author John Naisbitt predicts that the convenience industry will account for franchising's biggest gains in the next 20 years...Signs of the convenience age abound...New entrants are rushing to cater to the time-obsessed...(Benway, Et. al., 1987). "...the recent inventions Americans prize most are those that yield convenience and control...the message is convenience matters most (Wessel, 1989). "A trio of trends will create a new world in which marketers will have to learn new rules in order to prosper. The trends: the aging of the population, its evolving ethnic composition, and insatiable demands for convenience and service (Knowlton, 1990).

Demographic changes, increased time pressure, role overload, changes in consumption values, and a wider variety of life styles accelerate the demand for convenience. *Business Week* (April 27, 1987) referred the growing number of firms that cater to consumer demands for convenience as the "convenience industry." Professor Dick Berry in the December 24, 1990, issue of *Marketing News* reported the results of a national survey of marketing professionals in which convenience emerged as the third most important factor in "the marketing mix for the 90s." Therefore, Berry argues that marketers should add convenience to the traditional elements in the marketing mix. Although the business press frequently focuses on convenience, marketing researchers began only recently to renew their interest in the subject. Anderson (1969, 1972) led an early investigation of convenience as he and other researchers in the 1970s examined the relationship between convenience consumption and employment status of household members and other factors. From the late 1970s until recently, however, researchers have shown only scattered interest in convenience. Work by Yale and Venkatesh (1985), Morganosky (1986), Brown (1989), and McEnally and Brown (1989) indicates a new interest in examining convenience in marketing.

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In spite of this work, a review of the literature reveals: 1) an absence of a common definition of just what convenience in marketing is, 2) a failure to recognize the multidimensionality of the construct, 3) a focus on factors that cause the demand for convenience rather than on convenience itself, and 4) confusion resulting from misapplication of the term in marketing. To address these issues, this paper develops a definition of convenience, suggests dimensions of the construct, and proposes a clarification in the use of the term in marketing. By clarifying the convenience construct, the paper accentuates the need for more research to explore the proposed dimensionality of convenience and to examine the use of the construct in strategic and tactical marketing planning. To initiate such a stream of research, the authors present nine hypotheses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rather than concentrating on the convenience construct, researchers have focused almost exclusively on examining factors which increase the demand for convenience. The following sections describe this research.

Marketing researchers have given most of their attention to pursuing the link between the employment status of the adult members of the household and convenience consumption. The central hypothesis in these studies has been that as the wife or second earner enters the work force, there is less time available to perform various tasks around the home and, consequently, an increased demand for convenient products or services. Works by Marple and Wissman (1968), Anderson (1969, 1972), Waldman and Jacobs (1978), Vickery (1979), Strober (1979), Strober and Weinburg (1977, 1980), Schaninger and Allen (1981), Bellante and Foster (1984), Bryant (1988), and Rubin, Riley, and Molina (1990) all examined various aspects of employment status and convenience consumption. These studies are characterized by different and sometimes contradictory findings. For example, Marple and Wissman (1968) found that lower-income working housewives and higher-income, non-working housewives were high in convenience food orientation. However, Anderson (1969) found no significant relation between homemaker employment status and convenience consumption. Bryant (1988) even argued that families with working wives will spend <u>less</u> on consumer durables.

A number of researchers have examined the relationship between stage of the family life cycle and/or family <u>socioeconomic status</u> and convenience consumption. Anderson (1969) found that family socioeconomic status was a significantly stronger discriminator of convenience goods orientation than stage in the family life cycle, just the reverse of his findings on convenience food orientation. Noting that prior studies had failed to support the hypothesis that the wife's employment status would lead to increased use of convenience goods, Reilly (1982) introduced role theory (Sarbin and Allen, 1968; Ostlund, 1973) to test the relationships. Reilly found that the wife's employment influenced family consumption indirectly through <u>role overload</u>. Bellizzi and Hite (1986) also examined the effect of role overload on convenience consumption and concluded that role overload may be caused by factors other than work and that role overload may not always imply either product or shopping style convenience.

Concerning the <u>consumer's use of time</u>, another group of researchers has suggested that the scarcity of time caused by changes in life styles and life cycles drives the demand for convenience. Berry (1979) noted that despite predictions of a "leisure society," Americans "...perceive not an abundance of time but a poverty of time..." (p. 59) Berry suggested that the rising number of women in the labor force and the increasing amount of time spent on physical and mental well being were the two principal causes of this trend. Consumers will thus become "time-buying" consumers who are interested in products and services that reduce time expenditures. Berry echoes Voss and Blackwell (1979) who reasoned that there are "time-consuming" and "time-producing" goods. Feldman and Hornick (1981) argued, however, that despite the importance of the concept of time, researchers had treated it as a given or dealt with it only indirectly. Because resources are limited, consumers must determine priorities -- thereby forming what Feldman and Hornick call a person's "timestyle." They also hypothesized that different segments will have different timestyles. Therefore, "product differentiation may be based on differences in the time characteristics of goods." (p. 415) Further, Graham (1981) pointed out that there are three different models of time and each model would produce different patterns of reaction to common consumer behavior situations.

Another set of researchers has taken a broader view by suggesting that <u>consumer values</u>, rather than factors such as work status or role overload, produce an orientation towards, or away from, convenience. Vinson, Scott, and Lamont (1977) hypothesized that there are three classes of values: global, domain-specific, and evaluative beliefs. Stampfl (1982) presented a typology of consumers that focused on <u>global</u> values. Stampfl contrasted his "industrial" and "post-industrial" consumer groups relative to their orientation toward convenience. Whereas the industrial consumer uses convenience as a "marketing loadstone," the post-industrial consumer only pursues convenience when it is cost-effective <u>and</u> environmentally supportive. Stampfl implies that post-industrial consumers do not pursue convenience at any cost, challenging the conventional wisdom that all consumers will always prefer more convenience.

Morganosky (1986) focused on <u>domain-specific</u> values while trying to identify cost-oriented versus convenience-oriented consumers in three specific domains: food, clothing, and household equipment. The author hypothesized that the demographics, life styles, and consumer values of cost-oriented consumers would be different from those of convenience-oriented consumers. She defined the convenience-oriented consumer "...as one that seeks to 'accomplish a task in the shortest time with the least expenditure of human energy'" whereas the cost-oriented consumer "based selection on maximizing the use of money." (p. 37) Morganosky found that the demographic variables of age and household income distinguished the two groups across all three product categories. The family-type variable differentiated the two groups' orientations in the food and household equipment categories.

While examining the factors that cause the demand for convenience, researchers have also tried to examine which <u>product types</u> would be affected by that demand. Marple and Wissmann (1968) and Anderson (1969, 1972) addressed the issue of how household characteristics would affect the demand for convenience foods. Anderson (1969, 1972), Strober and Weinberg (1977, 1980), and Nickols and Fox (1983) studied how household characteristics would affect the demand for convenience goods, especially durables. Strober and Weinberg concluded that the wife's employment was not a significant factor in the purchase of durables and that once one controlled for family income, families with and without working wives had similar consumption patterns. Bellante and Foster (1984) analyzed working and non-working homemakers' expenditures on services. Although noting that prior research by Waldman and Jacobs (1978), Vickery (1979) and Strober (1979) found some differences in the consumption of services between families with different employment patterns, these findings were not conclusive. In their own study, Bellante and Foster found that "...more than just the employment or nonemployment of the wife accounts for these differences." (p. 706)

This brief literature review has been designed to highlight four points. First, in all of the work examined, researchers have not presented a definition of convenience. The research has primarily focused on why consumers want convenience rather than on what convenience is. Especially in the articles that examine the orientation towards convenience foods or convenience goods, the authors do not establish that the items involved in the study are indeed convenient based on some definition and that consumers involved in the studies perceive the items as convenient. For example, in Anderson's (1972) article, respondents were asked about their usage of 52 convenience food items and 50 durables. Anderson presented no specific discussion, however, of how these items were selected. In this and other studies, investigators simply assumed that certain food and durable goods were convenient items; but it is not known whether the participants thought the products/services were convenient. Researchers have not dealt with convenience from the consumer's perspective and have not examined the relative nature of convenience. That is, consumers may see a product or service as convenient at one time or place but not in another. Researchers have simply assumed that they and consumers share a common understanding of the concept of convenience.

Second, the absence of a common definition to guide research probably contributes significantly to the lack of consistent findings in the research. Some authors were not able to replicate other authors' findings, and some authors reach conclusions contradictory to those of other authors. Third, many authors have treated convenience as a unidimensional construct driven only by the desire to save time or to utilize it better. Writers see things that "save work" as really saving time. Not only is convenience multidimensional, but the importance of the dimensions may vary across consumers. For example, work by Feldman and Hornick (1981) and Graham (1981) suggests that even time is not a uniform construct either within or across cultures. They would argue that "saving time" is not equally important to all consumers, and that it may not be important at all to some consumers. Further, the work focusing on consumer values suggests that there may be sets of values operating to influence the viability and importance of the dimensions of convenience among consumers. Finally, marketers cause confusion by applying the term, convenience, in different ways. In many of the studies reviewed, convenience is seen as being a characteristic of the product or service. However, the term is usually defined in marketing textbooks relative to the effort expended by the consumer in purchasing a product.

DEFINING CONVENIENCE

To begin clarifying the concept of convenience, researchers need to agree on a definition. Murphy and Enis (1986) suggested that the cost of a product has two independent dimensions, effort and risk. They defined "effort" to include the objective amount of time and money required to purchase a product. Other authors, such as Kotler and Zaltman (1971), Shapiro (1973), and Fine (1981) have also included nonmonetary costs, such as opportunity costs, energy costs, and psychic costs, in their price constructs. Morganosky (1986) defined the convenience-oriented consumer as one who wanted to minimize the expenditure of time and human energy. Thus, the consumer has three general categories of resources to "spend" in acquiring, using, or disposing of a product or service (an offering): money, time, and energy. However, Stampfl (1982) and Voss and Blackwell (1979) argued that a consumer's money resources are interchangeable with time and human energy resources. Stampfl noted that the consumer must evaluate the cost/benefit in time and energy associated with a particular offering. In the face of time and energy "poverty" (Berry 1979), the consumer must decide if the price of an offering is appropriate given the time and energy required or the time and energy "saved" by the product. Thus, an offering requires a certain amount of time and energy to acquire, use, and dispose of it. The decision to purchase an offering occurs when: 1) the price of that offering is appropriate to the required expenditure of time and energy relative to other options the consumer faces, 2) the consumer sees the offering as "producing" (through time and energy savings) time and energy that can be used for other purposes, or 3) the offering allows the consumer to accomplish something that is not possible, given the consumer's time and energy budgets, without the product or service.

Furthermore, although a consumer can interchange money with time and energy resources, a consumer does not need to have or use monetary resources to be interested in convenience. A person who has no money may still be interested in accomplishing the tasks that face him/her in a fashion that reduces the time and/or energy requirements. In fact, one may argue that the goal of a firm is to provide additional convenience in its offerings while making the improvement appear to be "free" to the consumer. By including an ATM card in a package of banking services, the bank provides convenience to a customer without specifically charging the consumer for that convenience. These arguments suggest that the two important resources in the consumer's decision to acquire and consume an offering are the time and energy requirements. Money may limit or expand the consumer's choice set, but within the options available, the consumer can evaluate the relative time and energy requirements of competing offerings. With this background, the authors propose this definition of convenience:

> **Convenience is a reduction in the amount of consumer time and/or energy required to acquire, use, and dispose of a product or service relative to the time and energy required by other offerings in the product/service class.**

By examining the convenience of offerings relative to others in a product/service class, marketers could produce a

EXHIBIT 1
ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE OF CONVENIENCE IN A PRODUCT CLASS

Products:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

0 ---------------- Increasing Time/Energy Requirements--------------------------> 100%

<--------------------------------Increasing Convenience-----------------------------------

Product 1--	Order home-delivered pizza
Product 2--	Pick up fresh-cooked pizza
Product 3--	Eat Pizza in restaurant
Product 4--	Cook frozen pizza kept in refrigerator
Product 5--	Cook ready-to-cook pizza purchased at store
Product 6--	Prepare pizza from boxed pizza mix
Product 7--	Make pizza from scratch

distribution of the offerings such as the illustrative example in Exhibit 1. Moving an offering to the left in the distribution in the Exhibit indicates that an offering is becoming more convenient, while movement to the right indicates that the offering is becoming less convenient.

THE DIMENSIONS OF CONVENIENCE

The discussion of the literature and the definition proposed above suggest that convenience is not a unidimensional construct. Yale and Venkatesh (1985) proposed six "classes" of convenience: time utilization, accessibility, portability, appropriateness, handiness, and avoidance of unpleasantness. The authors did not derive these classes from any theory, however; and researchers would find several of the classes, such as appropriateness, ambiguous and difficult to measure. Brown (1989) proposed five dimensions of convenience: time, place, acquisition, use, and execution. The first four dimensions derive from economic utility theory (time, place, possession, and form utilities), thus suggesting that convenience serves as a summary variable for the four utilities. Further, Yale and Venkatesh's classes can be subsumed by Brown's more general dimensions. The "avoidance of unpleasantness" class, for example, deals with the consumer's ability to get someone else to perform an unpleasant task. Brown's "execution" dimension would encompass this aspect of convenience while also including a situation when the consumer simply wants to free time or energy by contracting a task to someone else, even if the task is pleasant. Subsequent work by the authors of this paper (Brown and McEnally, 1991) used focus groups to explore the construct of convenience and to examine Brown's dimensions. Four groups of working consumers (chosen based on family type and employment status) identified convenient products and services in an unaided discussion format and discussed why the offerings were convenient. Seven independent raters analyzed 241 comments from the four groups. The raters classified each comment according to which of seven categories of convenience it represented. Although the raters designated the largest number of comments as relating to saving time, that category accounted for only 30.2% of the 149 comments about which rater agreement was classified as "high." The raters classified the remaining 69.8% of the comments as relating to physical effort (17.4%), time offered (17.4%), place offered (13.4%), ease of acquisition (10.1%), execution (6.7%), and mental effort (4.7%).

Examination of these results suggests that Brown's five categories can be reduced. The "time offered," "place offered," and "ease of acquisition" categories relate to the time and energy required in acquisition; and the "physical effort" and "mental effort" categories relate to energy used in either acquiring, consuming, or disposing of offerings. Brown's proposed execution dimension is not a dimension of convenience but represents the consumer's decision to "contract out" some or all of the time and energy requirements normally associated with an offering. In some sense, execution represents the ultimate convenience -- letting someone else do some or all of something for you. Thus, the authors have reduced the proposed dimensions to time and energy. Further, the consumer seeks convenience in the acquisition, consumption, and disposal phases of product ownership.

Researchers have previously concentrated primarily on convenience in consumption (use). However, to evaluate properly an offering's total convenience to consumers, researchers must consider the impact of convenience on acquisition and disposal as well.

The proposed definition of convenience suggests a two-dimensional construct organized in the acquisition, use, and disposal phases. Each of these phases has time and energy dimensions. Exhibit 2 presents the construct. Within all three phases, the time element deals not only with timesaving but also with the efficient use of time. Consumers cannot "save" time in the sense that it can be stored for later use. Many conveniences save small amounts of time that can not really be used by the consumer. Yet, consumers value these timesavings because they like to feel that they have used time efficiently. The time dimension also includes the convenience that results from businesses offering products/services at different or more "clock" times relative to other offerings in the product class. Grocery stores that stay open 24 hours a day, seven days a week are one example. The energy dimension in each phase deals with the physical and mental energy used by consumers. Given the mental stress of modern life, a business' shaping of an offering to reduce the mental energy expended by consumers can be as important as reducing the physical energy required. In addition to saving time and making banking services available during non-banking hours, ATM machines reduce worry (mental effort) by reducing the amount of cash consumers have to carry. Consumers don't have to worry about running out of cash. Further, drive-up ATMs increase the sense of security while using the machines.

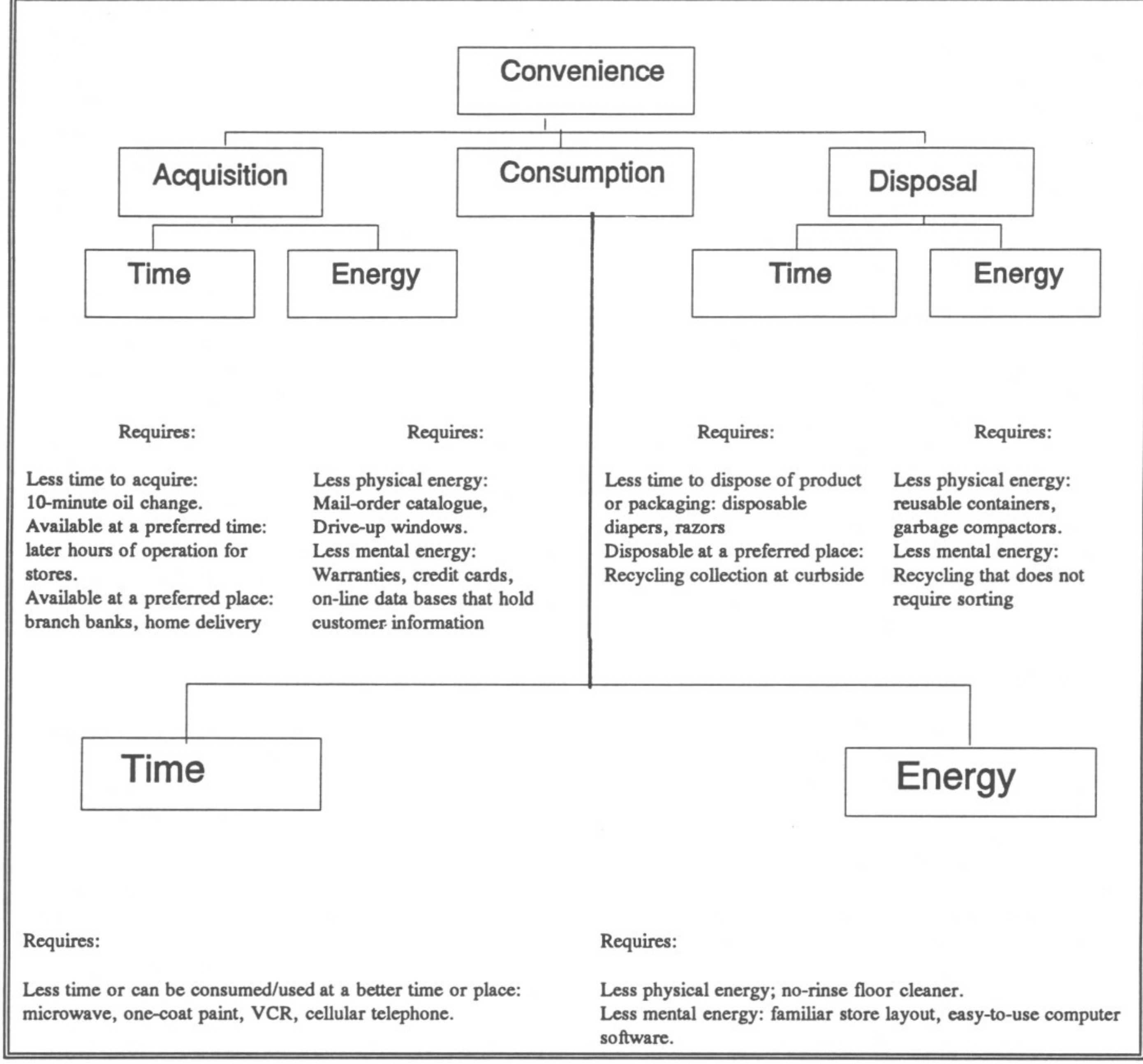
Marketers can combine the dimensions of convenience across the acquisition, consumption, and disposal phases. Having a pizza delivered to one's home at midnight provides acquisition-time and energy convenience as well as consumption-energy convenience (the consumer did not have to expend energy to prepare the product).

Now that the authors have proposed a definition and a structure of convenience, it is necessary to clarify confusion that arises over application of the term. Marketers cause confusion by using the word "convenience" to denote only the consumer's effort in acquiring a product or service while ignoring the convenience of the product's or service's attributes. Marketing textbook authors usually discuss convenience in connection with the classification of goods and services. Kotler (1991) defines convenience goods as "goods that the customer usually purchases frequently, immediately, and with the minimum of effort in comparison and buying." (p. 433) Kotler lists examples as tobacco products, soap, and newspapers. Murphy and Enis (1986) proposed a unified product taxonomy for marketing that classifies products strategically. They array their four product classes on two independent dimensions, effort and risk. The authors include "convenience products" as one of the product classes and define this class as being "...lowest in terms of both effort and risk." (p. 25) Like Kotler, Murphy and Enis indicate that convenience products are illustrated by commodities, unsought (emergency) items, and impulse products. "The consumer will not spend much money or time in purchasing these products, nor does he/she perceive significant levels of risk in making a selection." (p. 25) Murphy and Enis reviewed 21 other articles which present product classification schemes. Those which mention convenience goods define the class in line with Kotler's and Murphy and Enis' definitions. Murphy and Enis suggest that the marketer of convenience products, as defined by them, has an "unenviable" position and should try to move the product to another category.

These classification schemes cause confusion by focusing only on the energy aspect of acquisition convenience -- they focus only on shopping activity. However, as has been argued here, convenience involves more than just time and physical or mental energy expended in acquiring the offering. The consumer also determines convenience based on characteristics of the product itself, such as the time and energy required to use or dispose of the product, which may have nothing to do with the effort involved in purchasing the item. Even shopping and specialty items, the two classes highest in effort and risk in Murphy and Enis' classification, can have varying levels of convenience in acquisition, use, and disposal. Further, so called convenience goods such as old-fashioned can openers may, in fact, be inconvenient to use although they are readily available.

Marketers could eliminate this confusion by designating low-effort and low-risk offerings as "easily acquired" offerings and by not using the term "convenience" in this context. Consumers can easily acquire these goods because they are indeed low in effort and risk from the consumer's point of view. Because of their low price, manufacturers can distribute them widely and distributors can maintain a large inventory. But, as noted, calling them "convenience" goods neglects the other dimensions of convenience and focuses only on acquisition. Certainly, consumers purchase many offerings that they feel are convenient but that are not low in effort or risk. Contracting one's yard work, for example, could cost hundreds of dollars and involve substantial risk. The contractor could, for example, apply the wrong fertilizer or apply too much and ruin one's yard. Further, one might spend a lot of time and effort finding and interviewing contractors before awarding the job. The consumer sees such a service as convenient because it saves time and energy in consumption (use), but it is not a convenience good in terms of acquisition.

EXHIBIT 2
THE STRUCTURE OF CONVENIENCE



RESEARCH ON CONVENIENCE AND PROPOSED HYPOTHESES

The proposed definition and dimensions of convenience provide a starting point for research on convenience. The first problem researchers should tackle is how to measure convenience. Can marketers measure the relative time and energy expenditures required in acquiring, consuming, and disposing of different products and services so as to rank them relative to their total convenience? These measures would have to use phenomenological techniques, such as focus groups, that approach convenience from the consumer's point of view -- how a consumer <u>perceives</u> convenience is what matters. Can researchers determine the relative weights that consumers attach to time and energy use in acquisition, consumption, and disposal convenience? Researchers can use trade-off or conjoint analyses to explore these measurement issues. If they are successful, researchers can then measure the incremental value of increased convenience to consumers. As researchers are successful in addressing measurement issues, they will be able to test hypotheses. Based on the proposed definition of convenience, the authors hypothesize that:

H1: The convenience of products/services increases, from the consumer's point of view, as the total time and energy associated with acquisition, consumption, and disposal of the product/service decreases.

This hypothesis suggests that the dimensions of convenience can be traded off. A product may take more time to acquire, but the consumer may see it as requiring less time or energy to consume and/or dispose of the product. Therefore, the consumer may view the product as more convenient because the offering requires less <u>total</u> time and energy than competing products. Marketers need to explore the utility functions that govern these trade offs in different market segments. Marketers can also examine the impact of convenience on each aspect of marketing strategy. First, researchers can focus on market segmentation issues. As noted earlier, convenience should serve as a segmentation variable. Morganosky (1986) suggested that consumers can be divided into "convenience-oriented" and "cost-oriented" groups. The work of Vinson, Scott, and Lamont (1977) and Stampfl (1982) indicates, however, that convenience orientation will vary across market segments based on the underlying values held by those segments. Thus, the authors hypothesize that:

H2: Different sets of consumer values will produce different consumer convenience "profiles."

One is not either convenience or cost oriented. The orientation will vary in degree based on many factors. For example, a consumer who calculates the opportunity cost of his/her time and who has a strong orientation toward efficiency might be more convenience oriented than a consumer who is less concerned with practicality and efficiency but is more concerned with thoroughness. Further, as researchers are able to measure convenience accurately from the point of view of the consumer, the authors hypothesize that:

H3: Income, employment status, family life cycle stage, and other factors will influence convenience orientation.

Although researchers have been either unable to find such relationships or to find consistent relationships, the authors believe that accurate measures will identify these relationships. Note that the hypothesis does not specify directions for the relationships. As suggested by Brown and McEnally (1991) some market segments will prefer <u>less</u> convenience relative to the average convenience in a product class while others will prefer more. Consumers can trade off convenience to gain other objectives such as lower cost. In addition, the authors hypothesize that:

H4: Combinations of consumer values and situational variables will produce different consumer weighting of the dimensions of convenience.

That is, some consumers, due to their values or demographic, socioeconomic, or life style/cycle situations will value the time dimension of convenience more than the energy dimension, and vice versa. Some values, such as social or environmental consciousness, may even reduce the overall demand for convenience -- the elements of convenience could have a negative weighting, for example. Next, convenience will affect the product portion of the marketing mix. Murphy and Enis (1986) classified product classes based on the level of effort and risk associated with the class. The authors hypothesize that:

H5: As the level of the consumer's involvement in a product class increases, the value of acquisition convenience in that product class will increase.

As the consumer places more importance on a purchase, the value added by convenience aspects that reduce shopping effort will escalate. Thus, consumers will place high value on convenience in shopping for specialty goods, which are highest in effort and risk. For example, consumers will value specialty catalogues that broaden their search while reducing the overall effort involved in that search. In addition, they will value such conveniences as on-the-spot financing, home delivery, and extended warranties for high-effort, high-risk products. For easily acquired goods (convenience goods in Murphy and Enis' classification) the potential to increase value added by reducing shopping effort has already been exhausted.

Convenience impacts the product and place variables in the marketing mix in different patterns. The authors hypothesize that:

H6: Over the product life cycle, manufacturers will first focus on convenience aspects of <u>consuming</u> and <u>disposing</u> of their products.

Then, once the marginal gains in use and disposal convenience decline, manufacturers will focus on acquisition convenience through improved distribution. This hypothesis suggests that over the product life cycle, manufacturers will focus on aspects of convenience that they control and will only later focus on acquisition convenience. This hypothesis suggests that as the product life cycle progresses, manufacturers will pursue more direct channels of distribution in order to increase customer acquisition convenience and to have more control over those aspects of convenience. Likewise, the authors hypothesize that:

H7: Over the plc, members of the channel of distribution will first focus on acquisition convenience.

Once marginal gains in acquisition convenience decline, distributors will focus on convenience in use and disposal. Like manufacturers, members of the channel of distribution will first focus on the aspects of convenience that they control. Only later will they focus on convenience in consumption and disposal of the product and make efforts to have manufacturers improve their products along these lines. Marketers should also examine the effect of convenience on promotions. The authors hypothesize that:

H8: The effectiveness of sales promotions will increase as the level of consumer convenience associated with the promotion increases.

Consumers will prefer store coupons that are attached to a product and that they can redeem at the check-out counter over similar coupons that require clipping, saving, and carrying to the store. Finally, with respect to price, the authors hypothesize that:

H9: The value to the consumer of time and energy savings will vary across market segments, and this variation will affect the price differentials across market segments.

Consumers value convenience, and marketers wish to price based on value. This hypothesis suggests that marketers will attempt to determine the marginal value of increased convenience in a product class and will price to capture some or all of that value. Marketers can use convenience as a method to improve a product's perceived value and use that convenience to target segments that will value it.

This paper has included disposal as the third phase of the structure of convenience. The authors found no research on how the disposal characteristics of a product affect its marketing or consumers' attitudes toward the product, but the growing interest in the environment and recycling will correct this. Marketers will need to reshape product classification schemes to include disposal as well as acquisition and consumption. Further, researchers also need to assess the disposal characteristics of products and the impact of these characteristics on consumer perceptions and actions.

APPLICATIONS OF THE CONVENIENCE CONSTRUCT

Marketers and other business researchers continue to hear calls for research that is relevant to practitioner concerns. Researchers will find that although convenience research presents many challenges it offers opportunities to apply and test their research findings. Managers of many businesses are interested in pursuing convenience but need an improved understanding of the construct to guide their efforts. Understanding consumers' perceptions of convenience will allow marketers to make both tactical and strategic marketing decisions. Tactical decisions involve improving convenience for the firm's existing target markets. Extending hours of operation or beginning to accept certain credit cards might improve acquisition convenience for a retailer's customers. Strategic decisions involve selecting target markets and shaping the marketing mix to serve those markets based on convenience. Domino's Pizza has built a significant business based on home delivery. The quick-oil-change specialists responded to the inconvenience of the "do-it-yourself" and automobile dealer oil change options by offering a focused, fast, no-appointment alternative. Recently, entrepreneurs have opened a large number of drive-thru-only, limited-menu fast-food restaurants. They are responding to the perceived slowness of drive-thru window service at traditional fast-food outlets that has resulted from the increasing product-line width and complexity of those outlets' offerings. These observations suggest that a firm must understand its customers' or potential customers' convenience profiles and shape its marketing strategy to fit those profiles. By analyzing convenience profiles in a product market, a firm may find segments that are under-served from a convenience standpoint; or it may find gaps along the convenience continuum that suggest market opportunities.

CONCLUSION

This paper has proposed a definition of convenience, suggested a multidimensional structure, offered hypotheses, and called for changes in the way marketers apply the term. The growing demand for convenience makes additional research both necessary and valuable. In both academic and applied settings, researchers will be more successful and improve their chances for consistent results if they use a common definition and understanding of convenience and if they apply the term clearly.

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