THE CONSUMER/STORE "RELATIONSHIP":

AN INTERPRETIVE INVESTIGATION OF UK WOMEN'S GROCERY SHOPPING EXPERIENCES

by

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of consumer relationships in consumer markets has been investigated by loyalty and relationship research. However, mainstream consumer loyalty research has been developed in cognitive 'attitude-behaviour' framework. Nevertheless, relationship perspective has emerged as a theoretical perspective and attracted interest in the loyalty research domain. In addition, since the 1960s, relationship principles and relationship marketing (RM) concepts have also been developed in the B-to-B sectors and service markets. Moreover, relational thoughts and RM concepts have also been extended to mass consumer markets. Different types of commercial consumer relationships have been explored. However, this is the first dedicated study to explore consumer/store relationship phenomena from the perspective of individual consumers. The main objectives of this study are to: (1) develop the understanding of nature of consumer/store relationships and (3) engage in the discourse on methodology and the role of researcher in interpretive research.

An in-depth study has been undertaken based on interpretive modes of inquiry. This study has explored the lived experiences of UK women in the context of grocery shopping and consumption. As a result, a richly contextualised account of consumer/store relationships has been investigated in depth and a conceptual framework for consumer/store relationships has been developed. The significance of other aspects of relationships (such as the store constellations, and the association between value congruence and relationships) has also been highlighted. Indeed, the findings have shown that stores provide support for consumers in terms of: (1) consumers' shopping task fulfilment; (2) pleasure seeking needs; (3) self concept construction and maintenance; (4) self discovery, self extension and self expression.

Moreover, various interactions and multiple level effects between consumers and their stores can result in the diverse and dynamic bonds between consumers and the stores they shop. The research has demonstrated the validity of the existence and investigation of consumer/store relationships at the level of consumers' lived experiences.

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Above all, I owe the deepest gratitude to my family. My husband has encouraged and supported me when I experienced the highs and lows in the PhD process. His love is essential for me to progress. Martin, Dad, Mum, Ruirui and Lingling, this is for you all.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This introduction presents a brief account of the research question, the research objectives and the research methodology. It also describes the contributions of the research. The organization and structure of the thesis is also presented as a model that serves as a preliminary conceptual framework for building an understanding of consumer/store relationships. The thesis chapters are also summarized to give a broad view of the research.

1.1 Research Question

The research aims to explore the phenomena of consumer/store relationships. The focus is on understanding the establishment and development of relationships between consumers and their stores, through the exploration of the meanings of stores for consumers.

Fournier's (1998) innovative approach to consumer/brand relationships has inspired and shaped the research question. Fournier (1998) explored meaning-based relationships between consumers and their brands. Indeed, Fournier's (1998) research revealed that consumers derive meanings from their interactions with brands in their daily life. These meanings are grounded in individuals' lived experiences. These meanings can be understood by taking into account consumers' motivations/needs, particularly in their social and cultural contexts. Consequently, consumers can develop various 'bonds' with their brands based on the meanings derived from their interactions with their brands.

This research aims to extend Fournier's (1998) research by investigating the meaning-based consumer/store relationships. In order to understand store meanings for consumers, the research has focused on the understanding of consumers' shopping and consumption motivations and values in their social and cultural contexts. Hence, the research explores consumer/store relationships through investigating UK working women's lived grocery shopping and consumption experiences.

The research question also arose from the researcher's interest in the debates in relationship marketing (RM) literature. The first debate is about the plausibility of the adoption of RM in mass consumer markets. Even though in practice RM and relationship principles have been widely accepted in consumer markets, theoretically the appropriateness of the application of RM in mass consumer markets is still debatable. The second debate is concerned about the role of mix management and relationship management in mass consumer markets.

The overall aim of the thesis is to develop a conceptual understanding of consumer/store relationships. The aim will be achieved by focusing attention on the following objectives:

- to explore the nature and the development of consumer/store relationships.
- to investigate the diversity and dynamics of consumer/store relationships.
- to develop a conceptual model of consumer/store relationships.

1.2 Research Methodology

In order to accomplish the research objectives, appropriate methodologies will be employed. It can be suggested that the research objectives require qualitative research methodology. Additionally, the limited existing literature on consumer/store relationships has determined that the focus of the study is theory development.

Hence, the orientation of the study is descriptive and exploratory in nature.

In fact, interpretive methods are relevant for the research. This is for the following reasons. Firstly, meanings derived from lived experiences can only be obtained by interpretation. The understanding of these meanings will be a hermeneutic process (e.g., Thompson, et al, 1989; Yanow, 2006). Secondly, the research is going to apply interpersonal relationship theories and other relevant theories to describe consumer/store relationship phenomena. This can be accomplished by translating relationship notions from interpersonal contexts to commercial contexts. Thus, the research is based largely upon an interpretive approach with understanding as the main objectives.

Furthermore, the researcher suggests that at the theory-building stage, qualitative method is appropriate. However, at a later stage, more traditional methods may be suitable. Hence, the researcher takes a methodologically pragmatic stand. Indeed, it can be suggested that fundamentally quantitative and qualitative methods are not irreconcilable. They serve different research purposes. In addition, the choice of methodological approaches depends on the nature of research question. Thus, it can be suggested that a quantitative, deductive approach is appropriate where a substantial literature exists. Hypotheses can then be developed to 'test' theories. A qualitative, inductive approach is more relevant when little literature is in existence, or there is not sufficient theory to explain a phenomenon whereas theory-development is needed (Easterby-Smith et al. 1991).

1.3 Contributions of the Study

The research has developed a conceptual model for the understanding of the consumer/store relationship phenomena. Indeed, the research has explored the nature and the developmental stages of consumer/store relationships by exploring consumers' lived grocery shopping and consumption experiences. Thus, the research has contributes mainly to the enhancement of the conceptualization of consume/store relationship phenomena per se. Consequently, the research contributes mainly to the extant marketing literature in terms of the relationship notion of commercial consumer exchanges.

In consumer markets, two approaches have recognized the relational nature of consumer exchanges: (1) consumer loyalty and (2) consumer relationships. Although store loyalty has been recognised as a relational phenomenon, mainstream store loyalty research has not tackled store loyalty from the relationship perspective. In consumer store loyalty domain, the mainstream research has been mainly cognitive and psychological oriented. Thus, this research contributes to store loyalty research by taking a relationship perspective. Indeed, in this study, the relationship perspective has allowed the researcher to gain insights into the diverse and various forms of consumer/store relationships and the relationship dimensions at various developmental stages of these relationships. These insights have also enabled the researcher to question the dominant concepts of store loyalty in the mainstream literature. In fact, the mainstream store loyalty literature regards the 'exclusive, highly committed psychological commitment' as the main form of store loyalty. However, the researcher suggests that other forms of relationships are also valuable for understanding store loyalty.

Moreover, there has been lacking theoretical development of relationship theory in RM literature in consumer markets. Indeed, the RM literature shows the recognition of relational natural of consumer commercial exchanges. In addition, the RM literature also reveals the acceptance of relationship principles and approaches to commercial exchanges in consumer markets. However, the literature shows a lack of progress in terms of relationship theory development, especially in the retailing context. This research contributes to RM by investigating the nature and relationship dimensions at developmental stages of consumer/store relationships. Indeed, an existential–phenomenological-feminist approach has enabled exploration of the complexity, diversity and dynamics of consumer/store interactions and enabled the researcher to investigate the behavioural and emotional bonds between consumers and their stores. Finally, a model of consumer/store relationships was developed. Hence, the research has demonstrated that when RM is applied in consumer markets (e.g., in retailing), RM can build upon its own theoretical foundations, and therefore, RM in consumer markets is not necessarily a domain extension.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

The research aims to develop a theory, or at least to develop a conceptual framework, for understanding the phenomena of consumer/store relationships. Even though consumer relationship theories have been developed in many different contexts, consumer/store relationships have not been explored in depth. Therefore, the research is not testing some hypotheses or theories. However, we have to acknowledge the inevitability of the underlying interplay between theories and research (e.g., Spiggle, 1994; Woodruffe-Burton, 2001). In this research, literature streams - such as shopping and consumption, self and identity, interpersonal relationship theories and other related theories - are examined and used as frames of reference to enhance our understanding of store meanings and consumer/store relationship phenomena.

At this stage of the research, it is important to recognise a limitation of the PhD research: the research is not designed to enable generalizations to be made. Nevertheless, the outcome of this research, especially the theoretical frameworks that have been developed, might be tested and generalized empirically in future research. For example, the dimensions of store meanings (functional, hedonic, symbolic and expressive) and their effects on consumer/store relationships can be measured and generalised for the population as a whole. However, it should be pointed out that recognition of this limitation does not question the rigour of the PhD research. The purpose of admitting this limitation is simply to restate and justify the purposes and scope of the current research. Indeed, the researcher also emphasises the value and the importance of qualitative research that can be regarded as a field of inquiry '*in its own right*' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

At the final stage of the research, when we present and defend the research in the form of the thesis, structure becomes crucial. A key problem is to find a way of structuring the vast and diverse literature on which this PhD has drawn. Another issue is to present the researcher's interpretations of consumers' store stories from 10 case studies. Thus, to simplify the organization of the thesis, a preliminary model has been developed as shown in Figure 1.1. Indeed, a further benefit of this organization lies in that the approach allows the researcher to illuminate the concept of consumer/store relationships and helps the researcher to work towards the goals of developing a framework for understanding consumer-store relationship phenomena.

Within this preliminary model, at the first stage, the focus is to illustrate that consumers derive meanings from their interactions with stores and also from their consumption activities. Indeed, the literature review in Chapter 4 focuses on consumers' shopping motivations, values and the meanings of stores. Chapter 5 describes self and identity theories from various perspectives. Indeed, the research examined the participants' own accounts of the situations, needs, motivations and values. The analysis revealed the meanings consumers derive from their shopping and consumption experiences. The discussion is linked to the literature described in Chapters 4 and 5.

The second stage of the model illustrates the nature and developmental stages of consumer/store relationships with response to meanings derived from consumers' interactions with stores. The literature review in Chapter 6 presents interpersonal relationship theories. These theories are considered in the discussion of the findings presented in Chapters 9, 10, 11 and 12.

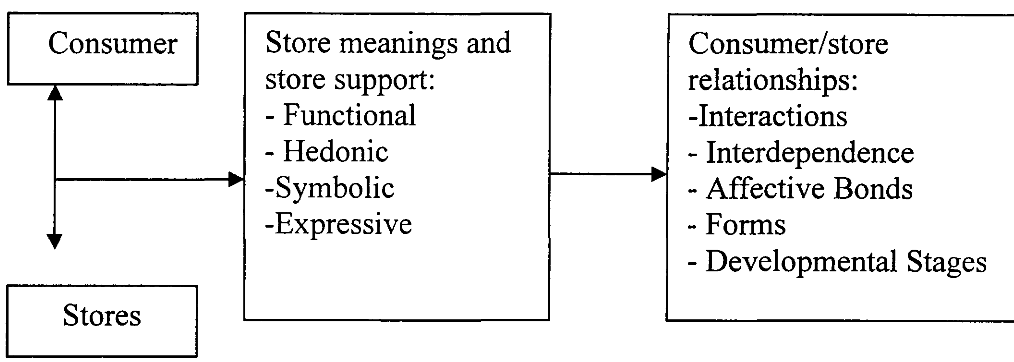


Figure 1.1: Preliminary Model of Consumer/Store Relationships

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

The first five Chapters represent 'The Academics' Voice', i.e., the voice of academics in the literature. In essence this forms the literature review sections within the body of the thesis (Chapters 2 and 3) and theoretical perspectives for the interpretation of themes emerged from data (Chapters 4, 5, and 6).

Chapter 2: presents a summary of literature relating to consumer loyalty. It is suggested that a relationship perspective has provided more insights into consumer brand loyalty behaviour. However, the literature review also demonstrates that relationship perspective has not been used to investigate consumer store loyalty in-depth.

Chapter 3: presents a review of relationship marketing literature relating to consumer markets. The debates about feasibility of RM in mass consumer markets and the paradigmatic shift debate are discussed. The literature on the relationship theory development in consumer markets is also described.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide background theories and lay the foundation for the thesis by identifying the subject or phenomenon under investigation and defining the research question.

Chapter 4: examines the literature on store image, shopping and consumption from various disciplines. It pays attention to the functional, hedonic needs and motives of shopping and consumption. Symbolic and expressive meanings of shopping and consumption are also discussed. These theoretical perspectives will be used as frames of reference to make sense of meanings of shopping and consumption, especially meanings of stores for consumers.

Chapter 5: provides theoretical perspectives on self, identity and self concept. These theories are drawn primarily from social psychology and consumer research. Particular attention is paid to various levels of representations (individual, relational and collective) of self concept. The components, structure and cognition of self concept are also examined. In addition, emotional, motivational, and behavioural aspects of self concept are described. These will also be applied in the data analysis to explain how consumers contend with their self concept and identity in their social environment, social life and daily life.

Chapter 6: reviews interpersonal relationship theories from social psychology perspective. The focus is to describe the definition, nature, and development of human relationships. These will be used for data analysis (Chapters 9, 10, 11 and 12) in order to develop a conceptual model for consumer/store relationships.

Together, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 provide theoretical perspectives for the interpretation of the themes that have emerged from the data.

Chapters 7 and 8 reflect 'The Researcher's Voice'. Indeed, it can be argued that the voice throughout the thesis is that of the researcher. Even though there is an issue of representing and being represented at the linguistic and the philosophical levels, as Woodruffe-Burton (2001) pointed out, we are not focusing on these aspects. This section pays more attention to the decisions the researcher has made and the experiences the researcher has experienced in terms of the relationship between the researcher and the researched (phenomenon and the participants).

Chapter 7: presents the 'methods' issues. In this chapter, the researcher presents a reflexive account of the evolution of methodological approaches. In addition, by reflecting on the philosophical tenets of phenomenology and existential phenomenology, the researcher presents a reflexive discussion of the ontological and epistemological issues with regard to existential phenomenological approach to consumer research. Then, at the practical level, the application of methodological approaches (such as interview and data analysis) is also discussed.

Chapter 8: describes the steps and decisions that the researcher has had to consider regarding the research fieldwork. The chapter also offers a reflexive account of the researcher's research experience.

The next four chapters represent 'The Consumers' Voice' and offer consumer narratives using excerpts from transcript materials gathered during the research. These chapters also describe the researcher's interpretation of participants' stories.

Chapters 9 and 10 provide a general discussion of the findings from the research and the development of the conceptual model. In addition, in an attempt to present a more holistic view of consumers' shopping and consumption experiences and consumer/store relationships, findings are discussed in Chapter 11 and 12 by presenting a small number of cases in greater detail.

Chapter 9: focuses on the illustration of the nature and characteristics of consumer/store relationships. These interpretations are also linked back to the relationship theories presented in Chapter 6. Indeed, this chapter extends the second stage of the model.

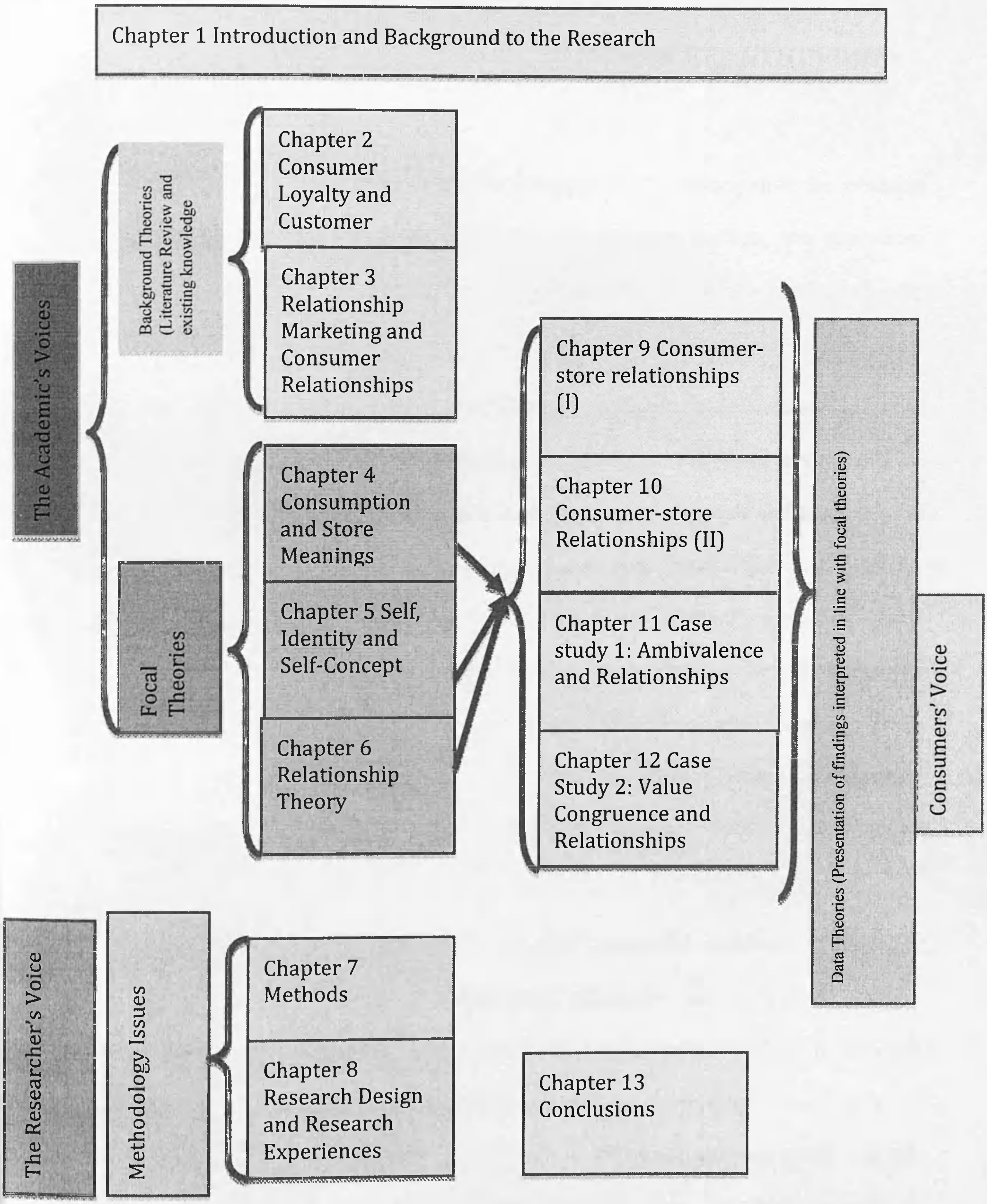
Chapter 10: explores the developmental stages of consumer/store relationships. These ideas are also linked back to the relationship theories presented in Chapter 6. This chapter also further extends the second stage of the model.

Chapter 11: presents a detailed discussion of the shopping and consumption experiences of two participants. The analysis demonstrates that these two participants share similar shopping experiences. Particularly, they have developed consumer/store relationships with similar characteristics. Indeed, the analysis shows that store meanings can make sense for individual participants only when we consider individuals' experiences as embedded in a system which constitutes of participants, their family members, social network, and all grocery stores they shop. In addition, the social and cultural contexts are also considered as the backdrop of individuals' personal system. Based on this assumption, the analysis highlights the ambivalence between various aspects of store meanings. Here we also focus on the themes of 'store constellations, self congruity and store relationships' and 'self monitor, self congruity and store relationships'. Indeed, these notions have further developed the consumer/store relationship model by incorporating individuals' personalities/traits that can affect the meaning of stores and the type of consumer/store relationships.

Chapter 12: presents a detailed discussion of the cases of another two participants. It will be argued that various values and meanings can affect consumer/store relationships. We also discuss how value congruence affects various aspects of consumer/store relationships: attraction; interdependence; intimacy; love; trust and behavioural consequences. This analysis has also further developed the consumer/store relationship model by incorporating value congruence as an antecedent of relationship commitment. Indeed, we also show how relationship commitment is affected by value congruence mediated by various aspects of relationships.

Chapter 13: draws together conclusions from the research and presents proposals for further research. Finally, the limitations of the research are discussed. In addition, the criteria for evaluation of interpretive research are also presented.

Figure 1.2: Organization and Structure of the Thesis



CHAPTER 2

CONSUMER LOYALTY AND CONSUMER RELATIONSHIPS

The notion of 'consumer relationship' is a concept that has underpinned the relational nature of consumer commercial exchanges. In consumer markets, two approaches have recognised the relational nature of consumer exchanges: (1) consumer loyalty and (2) consumer relationship.

In the consumer loyalty literature, mainstream consumer loyalty research has been primarily focusing on how branding (e.g., brand image and brand equity) and the related benefits (e.g. values) can affect consumers' relative attitude and psychological commitment. Hence, consumers' brand behaviour (e.g., brand choice and purchase) and consumers' attitudes, preference and commitments can signify consumer loyalty for brands. However, a number of authors have suggested that consumer loyalty is a relational phenomenon (e.g., Jacoby and Kyner, 1973; Sheth and Parvaiyar, 1995). Nevertheless, consumer loyalty has not been investigated from a relationship perspective until Fournier and Yao (1997) explored consumer brand loyalty from the relationship perspective.

'Consumer relationship', as a term to describe commercial exchanges in consumer markets, can be attributed to the emergence of relationship marketing (RM). Indeed, the consumer relationship concept emphasises the collaborative relationships between consumers and the companies. In addition, consumer relationships can be developed through companies' relationship efforts (such as interactive and individual contact). Indeed, relationship efforts can generate additional values and therefore enhance consumer involvement. Consequently, relational interdependence and relational attachment and commitment can be generated between consumers and the companies.

From the above description, it seems that the consumer loyalty and the consumer relationship concepts actually belong to two marketing paradigms, i.e. transaction-mix marketing and relationship marketing. Indeed, in the consumer loyalty literature, the focus is on branding, values, consumer attitude and psychological commitment. In addition, values can be generated mainly by mix variables. In contrast, in the RM literature, the focus is on how RM strategies and companies' relationship efforts can create values, which are crucial for the development of relational interdependence and commitment. Thus, paradigmatic shift notion has been proposed (e.g., Grönroos, 1997; Parvatiyar and Sheth, 2000; 1997; Gummesson, 1997; 2002). Nonetheless, it has also been suggested that consumer loyalty generation (loyalty notion) and consumer relationship development (RM concept) can be closely linked in consumer markets. Indeed, they could possibly be regarded as two stages of the same process. The branding process (through mix management) and the relationship development (through relationship efforts) share the same underlying rationale (value creation) and therefore, they can be closely linked (e.g., Riley and de Chernatony, 2000). Indeed, these two processes create different values. Thus, the ultimate aim is the development of strong relationships between consumers and the companies. Thus, we can suggest that the two approaches to consumer relationships can be integrated in order to enhance our understanding of consumer relationship phenomena.

Chapters 2 and 3 will review the literature for consumer loyalty and consumer relationships. Finally, the review aims to position and locate the theoretical contributions of the PhD research project in the marketing literature.

2.1 Literature on Mainstream Consumer Loyalty Research

The consumer loyalty research has gone through evolution, with three divisions organizing the research domain over time, as Fournier and Yao (1997) suggested. The first division is focused on the level of analysis. Indeed, there are two levels of analysis –the individual and the aggregate level. The second division is located in the individual level of analysis. Indeed, at the individual level analysis, as Fournier and Yao (1997) suggested, one way to divide the research and researchers is concerned with the primary theoretical and philosophical research orientations with respect to the consumer loyalty research. Thus, researchers have been divided into two groups. One group researchers, which has been termed "anthropological/sociological camp', concern the meanings and emotions especially hedonic, experiential aspects of brand loyalty. The second group can be categorized as 'psychological camp'. Indeed, this group of researchers has focused on investigation of the cognitive process for development of brand attitude and subsequent behaviour (Fournier and Yao, 1997, p. 452). Indeed, psychological/deterministic approaches have been the dominating individualistic approaches to store loyalty research. The third division is concerned with operational conceptions of the psychological approaches to the consumer loyalty concept. The individualistic psychological approaches to consumer loyalty include behavioural, attitudinal and hybrid approaches.

Next we are going to discuss the first and the third division of store loyalty research in more detail. The second division will not be discussed here but will be talked about under 2.4 (p.14).

Consumer Loyalty Concept
- Aggregate Level Analysis
- Individual Level Analysis
  - Anthropological/ Sociological Approach
  - Psychological/ Deterministic Approach
    - Behavioural
    - Attitudinal
    - Hybrid

1^{st} division *2^{nd} division* *3^{rd} division*

Figure 2.1 Divisions of the Consumer Loyalty Concept

The first division links to the level of analysis. Basically this is the division between the individual and the aggregate level of analysis. This division divides the researchers according to their assumptions regarding aggregate level prediction and forecasting versus individual level explanation (recognition of the deterministic nature of individual consumer repeat brand purchase/store patronage behaviour). At the aggregate level, mathematical models (e.g., stochastic) are used to examine consumers' aggregate repeat purchase patterns. Indeed, these mathematical models are also used to predict aggregate market phenomena (such as brand market share) and to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing strategies by forecasting on brand market share (e.g., Rao, 1969; Lawrence, 1969). Whereas, at the individual level, it is generally acknowledged that consumer loyalty exists and can be measured individually. Indeed, it is argued that factors affecting consumers' loyalty behaviour can be identified and manipulated to influence consumers' loyalty behaviour (e.g., Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978; Ordin, et al, 2001). Hence, the individual level of analysis is often termed as the 'deterministic approach' (e.g., Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978). The literature review on store loyalty research has demonstrated that aggregate approaches to studying consumers' store loyalty are not as valuable for retailers as they are for manufacturers. Indeed, manufacturers can use these approaches to studying brand market share and brand switching. However, numerical aggregation over individuals obscures the understanding of consumer loyalty behaviour at individual level. Therefore, in store loyalty research, aggregate approaches have not been given much attention. Thus, the store loyalty research can be primarily located in individual level deterministic approach.

The third division is concerned with various conceptions of the psychological/deterministic approaches to the consumer loyalty concept. Indeed, this division includes behavioural, attitudinal and hybrid approaches. Behavioural approaches mainly stress consumer loyalty as the consistent re-purchasing the same brand or re-patronizing the same store over time. In addition, behavioural measures can represent consumers' underlying preference for stores (e.g., Tucker, 1964; Cunningham, 1956; 1961; Sheth, 1968; Kahn, et al, 1986). The behavioural measures for store loyalty include '*the proportion of total purchase represented by single store used*' (e.g., Cunningham, 1956; Tate, 1961; Goldman, 1977-1978; East, et al, 1995) and '*repeat purchase rate*' (e.g., Rao, 1969). The practical values of behavioural approach have been emphasized as it is directly related to profit (East et al, 1995).

There are various problematic issues regarding the behavioural approaches. In fact, the underlying assumptions of these approaches can restrict the empirical data to observations that are considered as outcomes of decisions. Consequently, cognitive processes that underlie and create those outcomes are ignored (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978, p. 9). Therefore, it can be argued that without including other indicators, the behavioural measures of consumer loyalty cannot differentiate between repeat purchase behaviour and loyalty behaviour. For example, research on brand loyalty (Jacoby and Kyner, 1973; Jarvis and Wilcox, 1977) has found that loyalty behaviour and repeat purchase behaviour are not always the same. In addition to psychological reasons and brand preferences, there are many other possible reasons for consumer repeat purchase behaviour. These reasons can be situational factors, habit or consumer inertia and non-availability of alternatives (e.g., Ordin, et al. 2001, p. 76; Dubois and Laurent, 1999, p. 657). Thus, unlike loyal purchase behaviour, repeat purchase behaviour is not intentional, nor does it necessarily reflect commitment or constitute loyalty (Jarvis and Wilcox, 1977). Therefore, it has been argued that behavioural measures of consumer loyalty lack explanatory or diagnostic power (e.g., Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978; Dubois and Laurent, 1999, p. 657).

Attitudinal approaches stress that consumer loyalty behaviour can be initiated by an enduring predisposition or attitude (e.g., Day, 1969). Thus, attitudinal loyalty represents consumers' high-order or long-term commitment to brands/stores that cannot be inferred by merely observing consumers' repeat purchase behaviour (e.g., Kumar and Shah, 2004, p. 319). Indeed, attitudinal loyalty focuses more on cognitive processes (information evaluation and decision making) that can support the development of brand attitude and strength (Fournier and Yao, 1997, p. 452). Attitudinal approaches can capture affective and cognitive aspects of brand/store loyalty (e.g., Gremler and Brown, 1998; Taylor, 1981).

Indeed, attitudinal approaches to loyalty have also stressed consumer loyalty as a property of psychological commitment (i.e., beliefs, feelings and intentions) that result in consumers' consistent purchase behaviour of the same brand/store over time (e.g., Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978, p. 9; Dick and Basu, 1994; Oliver, 1997, p. 392). These assumptions lead to the measurements which focus more on the elements involved in cognitive decision-making processes. However, behavioural outcomes are often ignored (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978, p. 9). For example, measurements for attitudinal store loyalty have focused on store loyalty intentions. For example, these store loyalty intention measures have been described as *the tendency for a person to continue over time to exhibit similar behaviour* (Reynolds et al. 1974/75, p. 75) and *willingness to repurchase, willingness to purchase more in the future, and willingness to recommend the store to others* (Sirohi, et al. 1998). However, it has been suggested that these measures can measure evaluative and affective components of consumer loyalty but have low predictive power (e.g., Wind and Lemer, 1979; Dubios and Laurent, 1999).

Hybrid approaches stress both behavioural and attitudinal properties of loyalty behaviour (e.g., Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978, p. 9). For example, Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) defined brand loyalty as:

> *(1)biased (i.e., non-random), (2) behavioural (i.e., purchase), (3) expressed over time (4) by some decision-making unit, (5) with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands and (6) is a function of psychological (decision making, evaluative) process* (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978, p. 80).

Store loyalty has also been defined in very similar ways (e.g., Bloemer and de Ruyter, 1998; Williams and Burns, 2001; Odekerken-Schroder et al. 2001; Al-Awadi, 2002). These definitions emphasised re-purchasing behaviour expressed over time as the outcomes of decision-making processes that result in psychological processes (such as attitude and commitment). Hence, consumer loyalty has been defined as a multidimensional construct by combining attitudinal, motivational, or conative (intention) components with behavioural elements (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Ganesh et al., 2000; Yi and Jeon, 2003). Dick and Basu (1994), for example, introduced relative attitude concept. They suggested that loyalty is evidenced by a more favourable relative attitude towards a brand. Attitude here is viewed as a multidimensional construct including cognitive beliefs, affective feelings, emotions, and satisfaction towards the brand. Oliver (1999) also developed four ascending loyalty stages according to cognitive-affective-conative-action pattern of brand attitude and brand loyalty based on Dick and Basu (1994) brand loyalty framework.

Morgan and Hunt (1994) suggested that measures of loyalty based on attitude are consistent with their conceptualization of commitment. Beatty et al. (1988) also argue that central to the attitudinal component of loyalty is brand commitment (Beatty et al. 1988). Indeed, brand commitment is defined as an emotional or psychological attachment to a brand within a product class (Lastovicka and Gardner, 1977). Researchers have also noted that the importance of commitment in distinguishing between loyal behaviour and merely repeat purchasing (Beatty et al. 1988; Jacoby and Kyner, 1973; Amine, 1998; Oliver, 1999). In store loyalty research, store commitment is used to explain the development of bonds between store and consumers (e.g., Kiesler, 1968; Lastovicka and Gardner, 1977). Store commitment can enable us to define a degree of loyalty. It is suggested that there is a continuum of store loyalty. At one end of the continuum, one finds true store loyalty. At the other end, one finds spurious store loyalty. Indeed, the repeat visiting of stores is not based on any commitment at all (Bloemer and de Ruyter, 1998).

2.2 Critique of Mainstream Store Loyalty Research

Despite the developments of consumer loyalty research in respect of conceptualisation and measurement, our understanding of the phenomenon of store loyalty remains lacking. The following definition of store loyalty by Bloemer and Ruyter (1998) can represent the mainstream conceptualisation of store loyalty:

> *biased (i.e., non random) behavioural response (i.e. visit), expressed over time, by some decision-making units with respect to one store out of a set of stores, which is a function of psychological (decision making and evaluated) processes*

resulting in brand commitment (p. 500).

The deficiencies of brand loyalty conceptualisations pointed out by Fournier and Yao (1997) can be applied to these kinds of store loyalty definitions. Firstly, the essence of store loyalty concept has not been articulated or appreciated. The general definitions failed to illustrate the meanings that are important for researchers and practitioners. Therefore, these definitions are lacking diagnostic power. For example, measurements for store preference, such as 'purchase intentions', 'willingness to patronize when needs arises', cannot distinguish loyalty behaviour, habits and situational-driven store patronage behaviour. Moreover, abstract concepts-such as store commitment and preferences-cannot provide the information on the sources of the affection/preference that can characterise and distinguish store loyalty behaviour. In addition, attitudinal measurers-such as the willingness to repurchase, (re)-purchase intentions-cannot measure emotional components in 'loyalty' concept. In addition, store loyalty conceptions have focused on individual stores. Indeed, these conceptions cannot tackle the dynamic interplay among stores within a person's store patronage portfolios.

Secondly, with regard to formation of store loyalty, our understanding is still quite limited. Indeed, store loyalty is regarded as an outcome of '*a psychological process*' and manifests through '*behaviour response expressed over time*' (e.g., Bloemer and Ruyter, 1998). Indeed, explanations of loyalty formation have been drawn from cognitive psychology. The main theoretical frameworks used in store loyalty research are Dick and Basu's (1994) and Oliver's (1999) conceptual frameworks. Moreover, research has revealed the temporal aspects of store patronage behaviour (e.g., Lee et al. 2001). However, the dynamic and temporal characteristics of store loyalty have not been fully investigated theoretically and empirically. For example, some measures such as '*the number of stores patronized and the proportion–of purchase for each store*' (Rao, 1969), '*consumer's inclination to patronize a given firm (store) during a specified period of time*' (Enis and Paul, 1970) have treated store loyalty as static. Some measures have emphasised the tendency or intention for biased behavioural response and also emphasized the situations and contexts for repeat purchase behaviour (Reynolds et al, 1974-75; Odekerken-Schroder et al, 2001; Williams and Burns, 2001). Indeed, these definitions indicated the temporality of store loyalty, but failed to explain the dynamic/temporal character of store loyalty phenomena. Therefore it can be suggested there is a need to explore the temporal and dynamic processes of store loyalty development.

Thirdly, it can be suggested that the lack of advancement of store loyalty research has been caused by several factors. The first one that is universal to mainstream loyalty research is theoretical foundation. Theoretical foundations for consumer loyalty are dominantly cognitive. Indeed, these theoretical perspectives are mainly drawn from attitude literature, as Fournier and Yao (1997) pointed out. However, recently, other theoretical perspectives have been introduced to explain loyalty patterns. For example, in the brand loyalty domain, Fournier and Yao (1997) used interpersonal relationship theory. This relationship perspective enables researchers to explore dynamics, diversities and varieties of valuable consumer/brand relationship forms. The focus is on meanings and hedonic/emotive aspects of loyalty. In retailing, Beatty et al (1996) also conducted a study on consumer and sales associate relationships. They explored the nature, initiation and maintenance, benefits and costs of customer-sales associate relationships from interpersonal relationship perspective. In addition, the symbolic interactionist approach has also been used to explain loyalty behaviour. For example, Fournier (1998) and Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) have used the same approach (symbolic interactionist) to explore consumer relationships (such as consumer/brand and consumer/company relationships). Meanings are more related to self concept (individual self, relational self, life-roles) (Fournier, 1998) and social and group identity (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Therefore, we can suggest that these theoretical perspectives can enable researchers to gain more insights into consumer loyalty phenomena.

The second reason for the lack of development in loyalty research is the operative measurements that have restricted our understanding of loyalty (Fournier and Yao, 1997). For example, share of purchase is central for store loyalty measurement. It is suggested that store loyalty can be divided among the stores that consumers patronize. The smaller the share of purchase means smaller shares of store loyalty. It indicates that the less consumer purchase from the store, the less meaningful the store is for consumers. Based on the proportion or share of purchase, consumers are categorized as being either loyal or disloyal. It can be suggested that this can lead to the neglect of other levels and forms of loyalty. Other valuable forms of relationship might be labelled as 'disloyal' (Fournier and Yao, 1997). Consequently, these valuable forms of relationships are neglected.

Fourthly, Fournier and Yao (1997) also suggested that the loyalty concept in the consumer domain has imposed culturally biased meanings, such as '*fidelity and exclusivity*' (p. 454). However, it is argued that these cultural connotations for consumer loyalty have not been validated (Fournier and Yao, 1997). Consequently, it can be suggested that the relevance of exclusive committed relationships between consumers and stores is questionable in the context of the current market and consumer culture. Moreover, commitment has been portrayed as a consequence of an evaluative, decision-making process that aims to achieve optimization between stores.

However, research has shown that other factors (such as store environment, retailer promotions, and interpersonal interactions in stores, consumers' hedonic and expressive needs) can also affect consumer store loyalty behaviour. These effects can make the cognitive, evaluative framework and 'maximization of utility' assumptions for store loyalty concept questionable.

Fournier and Yao (1997) explored brand loyalty and defined brand loyalty at the level of consumer brand experiences. However, a definition of store loyalty at the level of consumers' store experiences has not yet been articulated. More importantly, besides psychological commitment, relationship commitment has been suggested as one driver for customer retention (Gustafsson, et al. 2005; Fullerton, 2003). Recent research has investigated store loyalty in much the same manner. For example, Macintosh and Lockshin (1997) examined store trust, interpersonal trust, commitment and store loyalty. Indeed, store loyalty has been regarded as a relational phenomenon. Therefore, it can be argued that in addition to psychological processes, relationship dimensions and processed need to be considered in store loyalty research.

2.3 Anthropological/Sociological Approach to Customer Loyalty Research

The third division for the consumer loyalty research, as suggested by Fournier and Yao (1997), is concerned with the primary theoretical and philosophical research orientations of consumer loyalty research. This tension can divide the consumer loyalty research into two camps, i.e., psychological and anthropological/sociological. Recent research in mainstream consumer loyalty research has revealed the importance of the emotive and experiential aspects of loyalty behaviour. In addition, research has also showed that brand meanings can affect loyalty behaviour. Therefore, it can be suggested that these research findings can suggest the need to shift the consumer loyalty research from cognitive/psychological approaches to the anthropological/sociological approaches. Let us discuss this trend in more detail now.

Research conducted in mainstream consumer loyalty has reflected the shift of the focus from cognitive aspect to more emotive and experiential aspects of loyalty behaviour. Therefore, this shift can reflect the need for a focus on emotional and relational factors for the understanding of consumer loyalty. Indeed, in mainstream consumer research, ideas such as emotional connections and brand 'love' have been suggested to describe the emotive and experiential aspects of loyalty behaviour (e.g., Fullman and Gross, 2004; Berry and Carbone, 2007; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). For example, research has shown that emotional connections between employee and consumers can generate exceptional service quality and service loyalty (e.g., Reynolds and Arnould, 2000; Sierra and McQuitty, 2005; Moris, et al. 2005). Interpersonal relationships have been found to be more important than tangible products for the formation of service loyalty (e.g., Macintosh and Lockshin, 1997; Wong and Sohal, 2003; Chao, et al. 2007; Han, et al. 2008). Interpersonal relationships not only include consumer and service providers but also consumer-to-consumer (Gruen, et al. 2007). Emotional connectivity between consumers and organizations can feature higher levels of meanings and commitment for consumers (Berry and Carbone, 2007). Brand love links to higher levels of brand loyalty (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Hart et al (2007) suggests that shopping enjoyment has a significant influence on consumers' re-patronage behaviour.

Existing research in mainstream consumer loyalty has also revealed the effect of brand meanings on consumer brand/store loyalty. Some studies have focused on interactions between consumers and brands at different levels and different dimensions. Research has also explored how consumers can derive meanings and then forge connections and loyalty to brands. For example, Anisimova (2007) examined the relationship between corporate brand attributes and customer loyalty. The results showed that corporate values, corporate personality, and functional benefits are the most important factors affecting consumer brand loyalty. Indeed, Martenson (2007) examined the impact of corporate store image (combined effect of retail brand, store brands and manufactures' brands) on customer store loyalty. The findings reveal that consumers can perceive stores as brands and store brands can be the most important factor for customer store loyalty. Binninger (2008) examined retail brand and store loyalty and the findings suggest that increases in retail brand satisfaction and loyalty can influence store loyalty. Another source of brand meaning is brand personality. Kim, et al. (2001) examined how brand personality can affect customer loyalty in the cellular phone market in Korea. They suggest that brand personality contains values at individual level (self-expressive) and group level (distinctiveness). Their research findings show that brand personality can affect brand loyalty (indirectly). Zentes et al (2008) reconfirmed that dimensions of retail brand personality could affect consumer store loyalty (directly). Darden and Babin (1994) provided evidence that affection associated with the store personality (retail environment) can give more affective meanings for consumers and there is a strong association between the affective benefits and customer patronage behaviour.

Indeed, mainstream customer loyalty research has also introduced relationship factors. For example, in the brand loyalty domain, Esch, et al. (2006) examined how brand knowledge and brand relationships can affect loyalty behaviour. The research reveals that brand relationship (brand satisfaction, trust and attachment) mediates brand knowledge and brand loyalty behaviour. Hennig-Thurau and Klee (1996) examined satisfaction and customer loyalty relationship and explored how relationship quality can mediate the relationship. Guenzi and Pelloni (2004) examined the relationship between interpersonal relationships (relationships between customer and a firm employee and relationship between customers), customer satisfaction and loyalty towards the firm.

However, it can be suggested that due to conceptualization and methodological issues in mainstream consumer loyalty research, the emotive, experiential and relational aspects of consumer loyalty has not been fully investigated. Indeed, we can suggest that anthropological/sociological approach, the interpretive methodology (Fournier and Yao, 1997) and relevant theoretical perspectives to consumer loyalty can be considered as a way to enhance customer loyalty research.

Corresponding to the call for relevant theoretical perspectives, Fournier and Yao (1997) introduced a relationship perspective into brand loyalty research. A relationship perspective has enabled the researchers to explore the dynamics, diversities and varieties of valuable relationship forms characterizing consumer/brand connections. This perspective emphasized interactions between consumers and their brands. The focus is on meanings and hedonic/emotive aspects of consumer loyalty. Product/brand symbolism can provide self-expressive meanings for consumers at the individual level. Other aspects of the brand (such as functional attributes) can also provide meanings. Hence, brands can become part of consumers' life (this is beyond purchase and consumption). The research has revealed that loyalty does not mean exclusivity or eternal connections but a dynamics process and multi-brand relationships. By focusing on meanings, the researchers have explored the contextual, temporal and evolutionary aspects of consumers' brand choices.

2.4 Conclusion

This review of the extant literature reveals that the anthropological/sociological approach to consumer loyalty focuses on emotions, experiences and meanings derived from the usage of products and consumers interactions with brands. Indeed, consumers can derive meanings from their interactions with the brand, the company, the staff and other customers. Thus, this approach can extend loyalty research from simply investigating consumer buying and purchasing behaviour to understanding consumers' lived life experiences. The anthropological/sociological approach extends the cognitive decision-making framework to more meaning-based (emotional experiential aspects of consumer loyalty behaviour) approaches. Meanings can initiate the establishment and development of relationships between consumers and brands/services company/stores. With the introduction of a relationship perspective, the researchers can explore and understand the relational nature of consumer loyalty constructs. Besides long-term committed and affection-laden forms of relationships, other potentially valuable forms of relationship can also be understood. Therefore, it can be suggested that anthropological/sociological approaches combining a relationship perspective can enhance our understanding of consumer loyalty behaviour. In relationship marketing literature, it is widely accepted that relationship principles and even a paradigmatic shift have occurred. However, these notions have caused debates in RM especially in the mass consumer markets. We are going to review these debates in Chapter 3.

Chapter Summary:

This review of customer loyalty research reveals the evolution of the conceptualisation of customer loyalty from a cognitive/psychological approach to a more emotional/experiential focused and meaning-based approach. It is suggested that the anthropological relational approach can enhance our understanding of consumer loyalty behaviour. However, the review also shows that the anthropological relational approach has not been employed to investigate consumer store loyalty behaviour in depth.

CHAPTER 3

RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND CONSUMER RELATIONSHIPS

In this chapter, we are first going to review the origins of RM. We will then discuss the appropriateness of the application of RM in mass consumer markets. Next, the role of mix management and relationship management in consumer markets will be discussed. Finally, we are going to review relationship theories developed in consumer markets.

Relationship marketing (RM) originally emerged and developed in Business-to-business (B-to-B) and service marketing. RM was generally developed as alternative marketing theories (to mix marketing) in order to explain new practices in these market sectors. It has even been argued that RM has become a new marketing paradigm and a paradigm shift has occurred (from mix to relationship management) (e.g., Deighton, 1996; Grönroos, 1997; Parvatiyar and Sheth, 1997; 2000; Gummesson, 1997;2002). However, this notion has been challenged and even rejected by some other theorists (e.g., Petrof, 1997).

It has been pointed out that the application of RM to enhance consumer relationships in mass consumer markets has not been successful (Fournier, 2001). Thus, the possibility of building and maintaining consumer relationships through RM efforts in mass consumer markets has been questioned. Moreover, due to the structural and contextual differences between consumer markets and the B-to-B and services markets, it is argued that RM cannot be applied to all consumer markets (e.g.

O'Malley and Tynan, 2000). Thus, the concern with respect to the plausibility of the adoption of RM in all consumer markets has been raised (e.g., Barnes and Howlett, 1998; Colgate and Stewart, 1998; O'Malley and Tynan, 2000; O'Malley and Prothero, 2004). Thus, the paradigmatic shift notion has also been challenged.

However, research findings have provided support for the relationship notions in consumer markets. For example, research has shown that consumers develop relationships with firms and brands. Interestingly, these relationships can be developed without the companies' relationship marketing efforts (e.g., Fournier, 1998; McAlexander, et al, 2002; Muniz and Schau, 2001; 2005). Indeed, these research findings have also raised the issue in respect of theoretical foundations of RM in mass consumer markets. Indeed, theoretical foundations for RM developed in the B-to-B and services sectors cannot be transplanted to consumer markets. It is necessary to develop relationship theories in consumer markets. Then, relationship theories developed for consumer relationships can further guide the implementation of the appropriate marketing and, in particular, RM strategies in consumer markets (e.g., Fournier, 2001; 1998). Thus, it can be suggested that proposition of the adoption of RM in consumer markets can be plausible.

The literature review has revealed the relationship theory development in consumer markets. The review has shown that few studies have attempted to conceptualise what marketing relationships are or should be (e.g., Bagozzi, 1995; Barnes, 1997; Price and Arnould, 1999). Particularly, little attention has been paid to consumer relationships in retailing market (e.g., Gruen, 1995; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; Reynolds and Beatty, 1999; Too, et al, 2001). The key issue exposed is the need to develop relationship theories for diverse consumer relationships in consumer markets.

3.1 Origins of Relationship Marketing

It is generally accepted that the term 'relationship marketing' (RM) was first coined by Berry (1983) (e.g., Kumar, et al. 2003; Grönroos, 2004). However, the notion that relationships are central to business has obviously been accepted much earlier than the time when the term RM came into being (e.g., Arndt, 1979; Grönroos, 2004). Nevertheless, for the purpose of the thesis, we are going to focus on how RM concepts were developed in marketing literature.

It is widely accepted that RM emerged as alternative thoughts particularly in the industrial and services marketing. Indeed, the emergence of RM notions was due to the limitations of mix management notion in terms of its ability to explain new practices in the industrial sectors and services markets (e.g., Grönroos, 1997; O'Malley and Tynan, 2000). For example, Grönroos (1997) has described the development of two approaches to RM. One theory is referred to as the '*interaction/network*' approach to the industrial marketing. Grönroos (1997) argued that various interactions (such as goods and information) and exchanges (financial and social) can occur between the parties in an industrial network. Indeed, all exchanges and all types of interactions can affect the maintenance of the positions of the partners in the network. Thus, these interactions and exchanges in the network can make the roles and forms of marketing unclear. In fact, some functions are regarded as 'non-marketing' according to mix management (Grönroos, 1997). Therefore, it can be suggested that mix management notion was inadequate to cover these new marketing practices and could not recognise the relational nature of interactions and exchanges involved in industrial sectors. Thus RM theories emerged to explain and guide these marketing practices.

Other approaches to RM emerged in services marketing since the 1970s. According to Grönroos (1997), various new concepts and models have been developed in services marketing in order to reflect the specific characteristics of services. For example, the '*perceived service quality*' and '*interactive marketing function*' are introduced by Grönroos (1982). Indeed these concepts emphasise that in services, diverse interactions can occur between consumers and system, physical resources and employees. Thus, these interactions create a high chance for the development of long-term relationships between consumers and their service providers. In addition, the concept of the '*customer-relationship-lifecycle*' model was introduced to cover the dynamics of relationships between a company and its customers (Grönroos 1984). In fact, in addition to the functions of full-time marketing people, other people can play an important role in the development and maintenance of consumer relationships (Grönroos, 1997). Indeed, these notions are not covered in the mix management marketing.

In addition to the RM approaches developed in the industrial and services marketing, RM notions are accepted and implemented in other market sectors (such as consumer markets) for the following reasons: (1) changes of market environments and (2) the increased importance of customer retention for the success of companies. It is generally accepted that before the 1970s, companies used mass marketing techniques and 'aggressive' marketing efforts to reach new customers instead of developing long-term relationships with existing customers (Moller ad Halinen, 2000, p. 30). The reasons for the prevailing adoptions of mass marketing techniques were: (1) the prevailing market environments and (2) the rewards promised by the mainstream transaction-mix management paradigm (Seybold, 2001; Gittell, 2001; Jancic and Zabkar, 2002, p. 658). However, with various changes occurred to the market environments, especially increased competition, companies began to regard the idea of keeping customers (as opposed to focusing on winning new customers) as the goal and the means for success (e.g. Berry, 1983; Aijo, 1996). Thus, it can be suggested that customer retention issues have enhanced the recognition of and adoption of RM notions in consumer markets.

To summarise, RM notions originally emerged and developed in the industrial sectors and services markets. Indeed, the development of RM approaches in these sectors can be attributed to the salient relational nature of interactions and exchanges involved. In addition, the relational nature of exchanges in these sectors is related to the structural and contextual features of these sectors. However, the appropriateness of RM thoughts in other market sectors other than the industrial and service sectors (such as mass consumer markets) has been questioned.

3.2 Debates about Appropriateness of Application of RM in Consumer Markets

The appropriateness of the application of RM in all consumer markets is debatable. On the one hand, it has been argued that the application of RM in consumer markets is logical (e.g., Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; Christy, et al, 1996; Grönroos, 1996). In addition, considerable evidence supports the application of RM approaches in consumer markets. However, on the other hand, many authors questioned the conceptual basis and empirical evidence of applicability of RM in all consumer markets (Barnes, 1997; Gruen, 1995; Iacobucci and Ostrom, 1996; Hibbard and Iacobucci, 1998; O'Malley and Tynan, 2000; O'Malley et al., 1997).

3.2.1 'Fit' between Marketing Contexts and Marketing Strategies

The authors who have argued against the applicability of RM in all consumer markets have emphasised the importance of the 'fit' between market contexts and relationship marketing strategies. Indeed, RM can be valid and useful in these contexts when there is a 'fit' between market contexts and the RM devices (e.g., Berry, 1995; Sheth and Sisodia, 1999; Beverland and Lindgreen, 2004). RM was originally developed in the inter-organizational and service contexts. Therefore it is logical to suggest that the RM notions can be used for guiding commercial exchanges and marketing practices with similar contextual and structural features as these in the industrial and service sectors (See Aijo, 1996; Berry, 1983; Frazier, 1983; Grönroos, 1981; Gummesson, 1997; Hakansson, 1982; O'Malley and Tynan, 2000; Fitchett and Mcdonagh, 2000). In addition, research has shown that relationship concepts can be used to describe commercial exchanges in some consumer markets such as: market sectors involving more personal services (e.g., Price and Arnould, 1999); most services (retail banking and financial services) (e.g., O'Loughlin et al, 2004) and contexts involving high levels of social exchange (e.g., Arnett et al, 2003). Indeed, research findings has demonstrated that in these contexts, where there are personal interactions between consumers and service providers, a relational perspective can be more applicable because '*consumers can easily identify the benefits arising from an active relationship*', as Riley and de Chernatony (2000, p.139) suggested. Indeed, consumer exchanges in these contexts possess some features of exchanges in the services or industrial sectors. Therefore, these research findings can reaffirm the 'fit' notion described previously.

However, it has to be acknowledged that many consumer markets (such as mass consumer markets) do not share the same structural and contextual characteristics as B-to-B and the service sectors. Thus, consumer exchanges in these sectors do not possess the features which characterise commercial exchanges in the industrial and service sectors. Hence, it is difficult to develop consumer relationships in these consumer markets (e.g., Barnes, 1994, 1995; Grönroos, 1991, 1995; Aijo, 1996;

O'Malley and Tynan, 2000; O'Malley and Prothero, 2004). In addition, the high failure rate of the RM programs in these sectors has been reported, as Fournier (2001) pointed out. Indeed, the applicability of RM in these consumer markets has been disputed.

On the one hand, it is suggested that RM tactics include mainly direct and database marketing (Blattberg and Deighton, 1991; Copulsky and Wolf, 1990; Goldberg, 1988; McCort, 1994; Petrison and Wang, 1993; Shani and Chalasani, 1992) and after-marketing tactics for customer retention, as Parvatiyar and Sheth (2000) summarised. However, in practice, these RM tactics are not effective in enhancing consumer relationships in consumer markets (Fournier, 2001). Moreover, as Harris and Ogbonna (2008) observed, with the adoption of these RM tactics by practitioners, a small but growing body of theory and evidence has begun to question the extent to which consumers endorse, encourage or even recognize such relationship efforts (Barnes, 1994; Fletcher and Peters, 1997). For example, Rowe and Barnes (1998) have argued that in practice, the RM tactics (such as database marketing and customer retention strategies) have emphasised customer 'lock –in' rather than facilitation of intimacy. In addition, O'Malley, et al's (1997) research has found that marketers' RM efforts for enhancing consumer relationships (such as intimacy and closeness) are resented by consumers and are regarded as privacy intrusions. Indeed, these empirical findings have undermined the suggestion that companies can develop and maintain relationships with consumers in mass consumer markets. These research findings have further raised concerns about the applicability of RM in mass consumer markets (see a detailed discussion in O'Malley and Tynan, 2000).

Moreover, another attempt to challenge the applicability of RM in consumer markets has been based on the issue concerning the theoretical foundations of RM in consumer markets. For example, O'Malley and Tynan (2000) have argued that the theoretical foundations for RM in mass consumer markets is just a hybrid of conceptual underpinnings borrowed from relationship marketing (which was developed from the business-to-business and the service sectors) and literature from direct marketing and consumer behaviour literature (e.g., Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995). Indeed, the lack of development of relationship theories for consumer exchanges in consumer markets has led to the problematic issues in respect of the operationalization of RM approaches in consumer markets (Fournier, 2001).

On the other hand, research has revealed the effectiveness of other types of RM tactics in mass consumer markets. For example, De Wulf and Odekerken-Schroder (2001) have identified effective RM practices in retailing (such as '*personalized welcome, farewell of guests and using the guest's name when possible*' p. 33). In addition, the research has further empirically proved that these practices could improve relationships between consumers and retailers. Indeed, it can be suggested that the effectiveness of these RM tactics can attribute to the fit between the RM efforts and the features of consumer interactions and exchanges in retailing contexts. Indeed, Sorce and Edwards' (2004) research empirically examined consumers' perception of B-to-C relationships and found that these relationships are a multi-dimensional construct and a mix of social exchange, service quality and transactional exchange. They argued that there are similarities between the B-to-B and the B-to-C relationships in terms of commitment and relationship duration. However, they further suggested that the current approaches to relationship building in consumer markets are fundamentally flawed, and even have negative impact on the development of integral elements of relationships such as trust and commitment.

We can suggest that we have to distinguish RM as a marketing principle/strategy with

RM as concrete marketing tactical measures. Indeed, RM as a fundamental marketing principle is shared by theorists in consumer markets. In addition, it is widely accepted that the applicability of RM depends on the fit between market contexts and the RM tactics. The failure of the RM tactics (such as direct or database marketing) in mass consumer markets cannot suggest the inappropriateness of RM in these markets. These RM tactics are developed from the theoretical foundations for RM in the industrial and the service market sectors. Thus, the adoption of these RM devices in mass consumer markets can signify a mismatch between the RM tactics and market contexts. Indeed, according to the 'fit' notion, in order to develop consumer relationships in consumer markets, appropriate RM tactics for these markets should be applied. Thus, in order to apply RM (as a principle) in consumer markets, RM tactics should be developed for consumer markets. The fundamental issue is to develop the theoretical foundations for various consumer relationships in consumer markets and consequently, these relationship theories can guide the operationalization of appropriate RM tactics and strategies in consumer markets (Fournier, 2001).

3.2.2 Features of Consumer Relationships in Consumer Markets

The applicability of RM in consumer markets has also been challenged through questioning the significance and relevance of consumer relationship concepts in consumer markets. Indeed, special features of relationships (especially the inequality in terms of power and authority) between consumers and organizations make the existence and relevance of consumer/company relationships questionable in consumer markets, as Fitchett and McDonagh (2000) pointed out. Thus, Fitchett and McDonagh (2000) argued that RM as a discourse can have a severely marginalized significance and relevance in consumer markets.

It is suggested that there are three main features characterising consumer/company relationships in consumer markets (Fitchett and McDonagh, 2000). Firstly, one feature can be described as '*power asymmetry*'. It has been argued that organizations always aim to dominate and control consumers for their own interest and goals (Iacobucci and Ostrom, 1996; Fitchett and McDonagh, 2000). Consumers can therefore be sceptical towards companies' benevolent marketing intentions. Ultimately, the mutual benefits required by the RM notions can become problematic. O'Malley and Prothero (2004) have empirically explored this issue.

Secondly, it is argued that consumer/company relationships in consumer markets are unilateral in nature. Theoretically, in consumer markets, the existence of relationships between consumers and companies needs both acknowledgement and a degree of emotional involvement from both parties (e.g., Sheaves and Barnes, 1996; Harris and Ogbonna, 2008). Moreover, relationship intensions are also important for the development of commercial consumer relationships in consumer markets (Arnould and Bianchi, 2001). However, in consumer markets, it is organizations not consumers that describe interactions in the markets as relationships (Fitchett and McDonagh, 2000; Riley and de Chernatony 2000). Indeed, the unilateral nature of commercial relationships makes the existence of consumer relationships questionable and undermines the relationship notion of consumer exchanges in consumer markets.

Thirdly, lack of mutuality is the third feature characterising consumer/company relationships in consumer markets. It is argued that the terms and conditions of relationships between organizations and consumers are not determined or negotiated mutually. The bias in such relations is such that one could legitimately argue that there is no mutual relationship, only imposed relations (Fitchett and McDonagh, 2000).

Thus, it is argued that these features characterising consumer/company relationships have substantially reduced the possibility of RM as a discourse or as a new way of understanding marketing and marketing priorities, as Fitchett and McDonagh (2000) have argued. In addition to the first three features which can represent the power bases of consumer relationships in consumer markets, other factors such as relative resources, interests of consumers and organizations can vary considerably and this can also severely marginalize the significance, relevance and ultimate adoption of RM discourse for consumer markets (Fitchett and McDonagh, 2000).

However, we can suggest that firstly, these arguments are from organizations' perspective. For example, these three features of consumer relationships in consumer markets described above emphasise the 'power inequality'. Indeed, companies attempt to manipulate and control consumers unilaterally in consumer markets. Indeed, the power inequality might dominate commercial relationships in consumer markets. However, what these relationships mean for consumers can also be a crucial element for the relevance and significance of consumer relationships in consumer markets.

Secondly, these arguments are based on the relationship notions developed in the industrial and service markets. For example, in services marketing, RM indicates the shift of marketing from manipulation (telling and selling) to genuine customer involvement (communicating and sharing the knowledge) (McKenna, 1991). We can suggest that these relationships indicate 'sharing' and 'communication'. These features can reflect the nature of consumer relationships in the services markets. Indeed, the fundamental issue is the nature of consumer relationships. Research on consumer relationships has shown that there are variations in terms of the nature and the features of consumer relationships in different market contexts. These relationships are based on theoretical foundations which are different from those of consumer relationships in industrial and service sectors. It cannot therefore be concluded that relationship notion is not relevant for consumer exchanges in mass consumer markets.

Thirdly, it can be suggested that when RM is considered as marketing principle at the strategic level, RM as a discourse is relevant in consumer market. For example, Berry (1983) defines relationship marketing as '*attracting, maintaining, and - in multi-service organizations - enhancing customer relationships*' (p.25). Thus, RM has regarded developing and enhancing consumer relationships as marketing priorities. Indeed, Grönroos (1997) and Gummesson (1987) have also taken a broader perspective of RM. Consumer relationships can be the focus and paradigm of marketing (e.g., Grönroos, 1997; 2004; and Gummesson, 1987). Thus, despite the variations of consumer relationships in consumer markets, RM should be understood as a principle at the strategic level. The implication of Grönroos' notion is that consumer relationships are the key for the success of companies. Hence, marketing management should be devoted to building and enhancing such relationships (Parvatiyar and Sheth, 2000, p.6). These RM approaches echo the theoretical framework proposed by Kumar and Shah (2004) for loyalty programmes. Kumar and Shah's (2004) framework has attempted to link co-existing goals of consumers and different levels of corporate goals (strategic and tactical). Finally we can suggest that the strategic approach of RM emphasizes 'genuine customer involvement' and customer-centred orientation.

One important theme of RM research has been focusing on understanding the values of interactions and their consequent impact on consumer relationships. Research has shown that delivering customer values has become the primary concern for relationship building (Webster, 1994). Indeed, consumer values are the foundation for the existence and development of consumer relationships. Consumer relationships can create additional values for consumers (Grönroos, 2004). It has been argued that in mass consumer markets, consumer relationships can also generate these additional values for consumers and companies. Relational bonds can bring about benefits in consumer environments (De Wulf and Odekerken-Schroder, 2001). Therefore, it can be argued that theoretical underpinnings of RM at the strategic level can be applicable to mass consumer markets. The key issue is the development of consumer relationships with special features (embedded in the market contexts and structures). In addition, the focus of RM in mass consumer markets can also be on value creation.

3.2.3 RM in Industrial and Service Sectors versus RM in Consumer Markets

Obviously, some of the theoretical underpinnings for RM developed in the industrial and service sectors are not applicable to mass consumer markets. But this problem does not necessarily reject the applicability of RM in consumer markets. We are now going to illustrate this point in more detail.

In terms of conceptual underpinnings, it has been argued that there are some commonalities between commercial relationships in the industrial and service sectors and these in consumer markets. Indeed, commercial relationships can be explained to some extent by the same theoretical framework (De Wulf and Odekerken-Schroder, 2001, p. 74). For example, social exchange theory is so far the most popular theoretical framework for explaining commercial exchange relationships in marketing. Social exchange theory has been a theory employed mainly to explain B-to-B relationships. This theory has also been used to explain the relationships between consumers and service providers. Indeed, reciprocity is regarded as the key feature of the commercial exchange relationships in service sectors.

However, the theoretical foundations of RM developed in the industrial and service sectors emphasise interactive communication and interpersonal interactions. It has been argued that individualised interpersonal interactions are the antecedents of relationships between consumers and their suppliers/service providers. However, the structural and contextual features of commercial exchanges in consumer markets are different from those exchanges in industrial and service sectors. For example, it is suggested that due to the contextual and structural characteristics, in mass consumer markets, consumers are viewed as 'anonymous' to companies. In addition, there are only limited interactions between consumers and organizations (Barnes, 1994; 1995; Grönroos, 1991; 1994). However, the dominance of social exchange theory has led to an inherent assumption that social exchange theory constructs continue to be useful in understanding the commercial exchange relationships in mass consumer markets. However, it has been argued that these assumptions have not been fully tested in mass consumer markets (O'Malley and Tynan, 2000). Therefore, the extent to which it is possible to explain consumer relationships in consumer markets is as yet unknown (Barnes, 1995). The lack of conceptual framework for explaining consumer relationships in mass consumer markets is one reason for researchers to argue against the application of RM in mass consumer markets. Indeed, there is a need to develop relationship theories in mass consumer markets. For example, O'Malley and Tynan (2000) call for some other conceptual frameworks to supplement the existing approaches to bring in more insights into the consumer relationships in consumer markets.

In terms of the nature of commercial relationships, it is argued that the entities of relationships might be different from one structure to others (Iacobucci and Ostrom, 1996). Indeed, commercial relationships can take on different dyadic natures and different relationship forms. Therefore, relationship success may require the recognition of different relationship characteristics (Arnett et al, 2003). Different types of relationships and their significance and relevance depend on the contexts. Hence, in consumer markets, the key point, as Fournier (2001) pointed out, is the need to develop relationship theories in mass consumer markets because consumer relationships in these sectors possess unique structural and contextual characteristics. For example, research (e.g., Fournier, 1998) has shown the existence of affective/emotional bonds between consumers and their brands. The interactions between consumers and the companies owning the brands do not necessarily need to be direct and personal. It is argued that consumers' interactions with retailers contain relational properties (e.g., Crosby et al, 1990). However, in order to explain interactions and relationships, conceptual frameworks need to developed and empirical research needs to be conducted (Gruen, 1995; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; Reynolds and Beatty, 1999; De Wulf and Odekerken-Schroder, 2001; Too, et al, 2001).

With regard to the RM theories, it is argued that RM does not form a general theory (Moller and Halinen, 2000). Relationship marketing theories need to be developed for exchanges with different characteristics. For example, it has been suggested that the relationships between consumers and organizations can be unusual types with specific nature. However, the lack of systematic conceptual and empirical research has been pointed out repeatedly (e.g., Beatty et al, 1996; Gummesson, 1994; Gwinner et al, 1998; Iacobucci and Hibbard, 1999; Macintosh and Lockshin, 1997; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; De Wulf and Odekerken-Schroder, 2001). It has been suggested that less consideration of the consumer side has caused significant limitations in relationship discourse (Sheaves and Barnes, 1996; Fitchett and McDonagh, 2000;

O'Malley and Tynan, 2000; O'Malley and Prothero, 2004).

In conclusion, we can suggest that the key issue here is not debating the possibility of domain extension (O'Malley and Tynan, 2000) or the applicability of relationship thinking in mass consumer markets. However, we have to admit that there are a wide variety of consumer relationships across marketing sectors. What is important is to develop conceptual frameworks to gain more insights into these relationships theoretically. In practice, these insights can be used to design the tactics to enhance these relationships in mass consumer markets.

3.3 Transaction-Mix Marketing versus Relationship Marketing

Another important issue in the marketing literature is the debate about the role of mix management and relationship management in marketing. Indeed, there is a strongly shared notion that the role of traditional marketing mix variables can be minimized in relational exchanges (e.g., Grönroos, 1994; Gummesson, 1997) because they are regarded as representing *'only a partial picture of economic exchange',* as Frutcher and Sigué (2005, p.18) described . However, other researchers suggest that these mix variables still play a significant role for companies to conduct their business (e.g., Coviello, et al, 2002; Hultman and Shaw, 2003; Frutcher and Sigué, 2005).

One widely accepted notion is that marketing is fundamentally about exchanges between manufacturers, channel members, service providers and consumers (Pels, 1999). With regard to commercial exchanges, exchanges have been described as:

> *a continuum with one end a single transaction and the other a long-run two-way collaboration...Between these two extremes are value-adding exchanges, where the focus of the selling firm shifts from getting customers to keeping customers (Child et al, 1995)* (Day, 2000, p. 24-25).

From this description, it can be suggested that in market exchanges, value represents one important element (Chiu, et al, 2005; Day, 2000; Jancic and Zabkar, 2002). Indeed, in market exchanges, a whole range of values and resources can be exchanged (Hirschman, 1987; Jancic and Zabkar, 2002). In other words, companies make efforts to create values for customers in the commercial exchange process. In this process, mix variables (such as products and services) can generate values for consumers. Indeed, mix management stress the importance of products and services in the value creation process. However, it can be argued that relationship efforts should be regarded as another important source for values. However, it has been argued that in mix management, values generated by relationship efforts are neglected (e.g., Bolton and Drew, 1991; Frenzen and Davis, 1990; Gwinner, et al, 1998).

Indeed, many researchers (e.g., Fontenot and Wilson, 1997; Frenzen and Davis, 1990) have suggested that products/services and relationship efforts can become two distinct and independent sources of consumer value (Liang and Wang, 2008). For example, Grönroos (2004) suggested that on top of the values created through products and /or services, the existence of a relationship between two parties creates additional values for consumers (such as *'customer security, a feeling of control and a sense of trust, minimized purchasing risks, and in the final analysis reduced costs of being a customer',* Gronroos, 2004, p. 99). Therefore, we can suggest that products and services are fundamental in the value generation process and relationship development. In addition, 'additional' relational values are also crucial for the development of consumer relationships. Therefore, there should be co-management of relationship management and mix management (Jancic and Zabkar, 2002). Indeed, categorizing approaches to commercial exchange (e.g., Dwyer et al, 1987; Grönroos, 1991) has provided some interesting insights into the relationship between mix management and relationship management in consumer markets.

In a categorizing approach, as Pels (1999) described, commercial exchanges can be located along a spectrum. One extreme is the exchanges in service and business-to-business sectors. These exchanges can represent relationship exchange. The other extreme contains the exchanges between firm and end user in mass consumer markets. These exchanges signify discrete transactions. In consumer markets, different types of goods and services can be placed along the continuum. According to a categorizing approach, exchange relationships in consumer markets can be approached from three alternatives: (1) adding a relationship dimension to the transaction marketing paradigm; (2) a new paradigm/a paradigmatic shift in marketing and (3) co-existence of the transaction and relationship paradigms, as Pels (1999) summarised. Indeed, it is also suggested that the nature of these exchanges depends on the interpersonal contacts between consumers and companies. The values and benefits related to the exchanges can be assessed by the locations of these exchanges on the continuum (Pels, 1999). In addition, the benefits of companies' strategies from transaction-type (focusing on mix management) and relationship-type (focusing on relationship building) can also be assessed by the places of exchange on the continuum (Pels, 1999).

Therefore, it has been argued that for a wide variety of consumer commercial relationships in consumer markets, different kinds of consumer relationships require different types of management (e.g., Aijo, 1996). This notion has been supported by some research which has identified that relationship marketing usefulness is determined by the fit between relationship marketing strategies and contexts (e.g., Berry, 1995; Sheth and Sisodia, 1999). Hence, it is important to design relationship marketing strategies and tactics that can fit the type of relationships in order to reap the benefits of relational approaches to commercial exchanges. In addition, it has been argued that companies should consider all variables (mix and relationship) in the allocation of resources (e.g., Wathne, et al, 2001; Fruchter and Sigué, 2005; Reinartz, et al, 2005). Besides, consumers might have different motivations - such as a relational or transactional intent (e.g., Grönroos, 1997). Therefore it has been suggested that it is not possible or profitable to create close relationships with all customers (O'Loughlin, et al, 2004). Companies should use both transactional and relational strategies for different customers (Berry, 1995; Anderson and Narus, 1991; Arnould and Bianchi, 2001).

3.4 Relationship Theory Development in Consumer Markets

The literature has shown that in general, limited empirical work has investigated the nature of consumer relationships in consumer markets, particularly from the consumers' perspective (e.g. Sorce and Edward, 2004). Indeed, a few studies (e.g., Fournier, 1998; Price and Arnould, 1999; Beatty, et al, 1996; McAlexander, et al, 2002) have explored some fundamental issues of relationships such as the nature and the meanings/benefits of consumer relationships in various contexts. In addition, the review shows empirical research has mostly dealt with the social links formed between people, either in the business-to-business contexts (e.g., Ganesan, 1994; Sheth and Shah, 2003; Palmatier, 2008) or the service sectors (e.g., Beloucif, et al, 2004; Bove and Johnson, 2000; Gruen, et al, 2000; Davis and Palihawadana, 2006; O'Loughlin et al, 2004; Price and Arnould, 1999). Indeed, most of the research on consumer relationships has been in contexts (e.g. services, channels, industrial) other than retailing.

This research aims to explore the relationships between consumers and their grocery stores. Nevertheless, a review of the existing studies on consumer relationships can provide insights into consumer relationships in retailing. We are now going to review these studies.

3.4.1 Consumer/Service Provider Relationships

Price and Arnould (1999) investigated the relationships between consumers and their hairdressers. This kind of relationship is termed '*commercial friendships'*. The findings have revealed that for clients the meanings of commercial friendships with their hairdressers include: intimacy; belief in hairdresser's good intention and care for consumers needs; self disclosure; reciprocity; trust in hairdressers' skill and expertise (p.42-444). The research also identified the factors that affect the formation of these commercial friendships. One factor is '*structural opportunities*'. The structural feature of exchanges between consumers and service providers can affect the chance of sociability. Another factor is consumers' goals for interaction (instrumental or expressive). In addition, research has revealed that the evolving perceptions of similarity and reciprocity of liking can also contribute to the formation of commercial friendships (p. 50). Moreover, in the research, trust has been identified as a distinct construct from relationship. Relationships cannot be reduced to trust (p. 50).

Coutler and Ligas (2004) conducted survey research on consumer and service provider relationships. This survey was conducted in four service industries. This research has developed a typology of consumer/service provider relationships. These relationships vary from '*professional relationships, casual acquaintance, personal acquaintance and friendships'* (p. 482). In this research, relational factors identified include '*emotional attachment', 'personal advice seeking' and 'socialising outside of the service encounters'* (p. 484). According to the research, it can be suggested that relationship types and relational factors vary by services sectors.

Beatty et al (1996) conducted a study on consumer/sales associate relationships. They identified '*business friendship*' (p. 235) between consumers and sales associates. The research was conducted in the upscale clothing markets. This research showed that the commercial friendships manifested through *'gift giving', feeling 'like family' and feeling 'close' and 'personal'* (p. 235). The research also revealed the evolutionary nature of the relationships between consumers and sales associates. For example, the research showed that augmented personal service is important for the formation of relationships at an early stage. A bond or close relationship can be formed between consumers and sales associates through receiving and delivering excellent service. The research also revealed that with repeat interactions, several dimensions of relationships could be developed. These dimensions of relationships include *'functionality', 'trust' and 'friendship'* (p. 234-236). Two factors can affect the development of trust. One factor is sales associates' intention of having consumers' best interest at heart. This intention needs to be continuously demonstrated by sales associates in the interactions. The second factor is sales associates' skills. It is important that their skills can meet consumers' needs. Functionality is another important dimension of the relationship. Functionality refers to '*fashion advice and convenient, hassle-free shopping*' (Beatty et al, 1996, p. 236). This research showed that the importance of functionality of consumer/ sales associate relationships cannot be overestimated. In this sense, the commercial friendships in retailing context are more instrumental. In this research, there is not much self disclosure between the two parties of the relationship. Price and Arnould (1999) have also suggested that '*commercial friendships are circumscribed and bound by their context and commercial exchange provides the opportunities for and defines the limits of sociability*' (p. 51).

Reynolds and Beatty (1999) identified four consumers' characteristics (personal needs) including *'time poverty', 'shopping confidence', 'shopping enjoyment' and 'social needs'* (p. 513). These consumer characteristics can affect the maintenance of consumer/ sales associate relationships. Using quantitative methods, they generated a typology of customers who might develop and maintain relationships with sales associates. The research has identified five categories of shoppers. Two of these categories of shoppers are termed as '*Happy Busy Shopper'* and '*Happy Social Buyers'* (p. 514). It is found that these two groups of consumers maintain relationships with sales associates for different reasons. For '*Happy Busy Shopper'*, having a relationship can eliminate time-related cost. The relationships for this type of consumers are more instrumental. For '*Happy Social Buyer'*, the reason for developing and maintaining relationships with sales associates is to seek social benefits.

To summarise, we can suggest that structural opportunities for social benefits can create the contexts for formation of commercial friendships. However, the relationship nature depends more on consumers' goals for interaction. More fundamentally, instrumental and expressive meanings coexist in commercial friendships. In addition, service contexts limit meanings of interactions and consequently the forms of commercial relationships.

3.4.2 Consumer/Brand Relationships

Another type of consumer relationship in consumer markets is the consumer/brand relationships. For example, Fournier (1998) explored consumer/brand relationships by using the life-history case study method. This research showed that consumers can derive functional and symbolic meanings through the interactions with their brands in their daily life. Indeed, the research reveals that brands can provide symbolic meanings for consumers regarding their self and identity construction. In addition, products also offer utilitarian meanings for consumers to achieve their life-role tasks. The relationship dimensions identified in the research include: *functional, emotional and psychological bonds* (p. 346). This research generated a typology of consumer-brand relationships. Types of interpersonal relationships were used as metaphors (e.g., *arranged marriage, best friendships, courtships* etc, p. 362, Table 1) to describe the various forms of consumer/brand relationships. The study delineated various dimensions of relationship that can be used to measure the strength/quality of the relationships (such as '*love and passion, self-connection, interdependence, commitment and intimacy, and brand partner quality'* (p. 366).

The significance of the study is that it explored the holistic character of consumer/brand relationship phenomena by considering the '*larger whole in which the relationships is embedded'* (p. 366). By considering the broader context of people's life experiences as a basis for the constellation of brands, consumer/brand relationships can be understood. Fournier (1998) further illustrated that the brands orchestrated as an entire sets to fulfil a range of goal-related tasks. The notion of brands as a system suggests that brands provide aids and meanings to consumers' lives. Therefore, it was suggested that consumer/brand relationships can only be understood by considering the individuals' '*brand system'*, i.e., '*aggregate level of the personal brandscape*' (p. 366). Indeed, Fournier (1998) suggested that the dynamics of brand choice and brand consumption could make sense by analysis of the '*shared variances across products and brand categories within the context of particular life experience'*. It has been argued that this 'holistic' approach is more effective than simply focusing on *'shared perceptions of brand differences within a category domain*' (Fournier, 1998, p. 367).

3.4.3 Consumer/Company Relationships

One type of consumer relationship in consumer markets is the relationship at the company level, i.e., the consumer/company relationships (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). Bhattacharya and Sen's (2003) research has suggested that in addition to utilitarian values, consumers' self definition and social confirmation needs urge them to value identification with company/based values. Indeed, these identifications provide support for consumers' personality and self concept construction and maintenance. Indeed, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) used social identity theory and organization identification to explain why consumers identify with or feel they belong to the company.

We can suggest that Fournier (1998) and Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) have used the same approach (symbolic interactionist) to explore consumer relationships. Hence, the meanings are related to self concept at the individual level (individual self and life roles), relational level (relational self and family identities) (Fournier, 1998) and at the collective level (social and group identity) (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). We can see that in both studies, interactions between consumers and the company/brands are not necessarily direct and/or personal. Fournier (1998) illustrated that brand /abstract entity can become the relationship partner through the process in which brands/abstract entity can be '*animated, humanized or somehow personalized*'(p. 344).

Harris and Ogbonna (2008) explored relationships between consumers and service companies in the context of English Premier League football clubs. The research shows that football fans have emotional relationships with their clubs. The research identified the dimensions of relationships such as intimacy, interaction, trust and commitment. Intimacy was manifested in the ways they compare the clubs to their *'friends'* and *'family'*. Intimacy also manifested in the way they devoted to the club emotionally as *'worship'*. The research also showed the mutual interaction and interdependence between fans and clubs. Commitment to the club is manifested in terms of fans' willingness to sacrifice and compromise in order to maintain the relationship. Indeed, the research has revealed a variety of forms of relationships. These relationship forms include: *'relationships lacking intimacy', 'relationships lacking trust', and 'relationships lacking commitment'* (Harris and Ogbonna, 2008). Therefore, this research has provided insights of the dynamics underlying consumer relationships with an abstract entity (football club). We can see that fans can personalize and humanize the abstract entity and form relationships with the entity.

3.4.4 Consumer Brand community

A 'brand community' is another type of consumer relationship in consumer markets. One definition of 'brand community' is '*a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among users of a brand'* (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001, p. 412). It has been argued that consumers can develop a variety of relationships with other consumers. Indeed, 'brand community' can be used to describe '*the customer-customer-brand triad*' (McAlexander et al, 2002, p.39). It indicates the social bonds built through brand consumption between consumers (Cova, 1997).

However, McAlexander et al (2002, p. 39) have suggested that other relationships that can support the brand community members might be missed if we perceive brand community simply as a social aggregation of brand users and their relationship to the brand. Therefore, McAlexander et al (2002) expanded the triad to include *'fellow customers, the brand itself, the product (at various levels) and the marketing institutions responsible for producing, distributing, and communicating about the* *products*' (McAlexander, et al, 2003, p. 2). It is argued that a brand community refers to '*all the relationships in which the customer is placed*' (McAlexander et al, 2002, p. 38). It is also emphasized that the meanings of brand community derive from customer experiences (McAlexander et al, 2002, p. 39).

Gainer (1995) has explored social relationships among consumers. This research explored shared consumption rituals/experiences in the context of art attendance. The premise of this research is that in addition to the symbolism of products, the actions involved in consumption also entail symbolic meaning (Rook and Levy, 1983) (Gainer, 1995, p. 253). It is argued that the shared consumption activities (art attendance) are means for people to establish and maintain bonds of a particular small world of intimacy and community (p. 254). In-depth interview and interpretive research methods were used. The findings reveal that shared consumption activities can be used as a means to manage social relationships at different levels. For example, the research revealed that shared consumption could be used as a means to exert interpersonal influences and to actively manage close relationships. Shared consumption (art attendance) can also be a means to maintain socially distant acquaintances such as neighbours. It can also be a means to help the individual to manage their individual and community identities.

The research on brand communities described above has focused on social communities arising from consumers' interactions in the shared consumption activities. Many researchers have suggested that brand communities can often be more imaginative (e.g., Anderson, 1983; McAlexander et al 2002). Thus, Carlson et al (2008) further delineated the brand community construct into social brand community and psychological (imagined) brand community. The former emphasized community membership; the structured social interactions and relations of brand admirers in the community. The latter emphasized the sense of community without social interactions between brand admirers (p. 284-285). Carlson et al (2008) suggested that the drivers of a psychological sense of brand community are consumer/brand identification and consumer/group (brand-user) identification. In Carlson et al (2008), identification refers to '*the degree of overlap between the individual's self-schema and the schema s/he holds for another target object*' (p. 286). The study explored the relationships between identification at the individual level and group level (psychological sense of community), group membership (social sense of community) and brand commitment. The research suggests that a psychological and social sense of community both affect brand commitment. The research also highlighted that customer/brand identification and customer-other brand user identification can be the drivers of a psychological sense of brand community. The research findings indicate that brand image-related attributes can create and maintain the psychological sense of brand community (p.290).

3.4.5 Consumer and Place Relationships

Using grounded theory methodology, Rosenbaum (2006) explored the meanings and the roles of places in consumer's life. By applying the environmental psychology framework of 'Stimulus-Organism-Response', the research explored the first dimension of the meaning of places. This dimension is referred to as the physical dimension. By considering customers and employees in this setting, the second dimension of meanings of the place is the social dimension. The social dimension emphasizes the social relationships between consumers and employees. By considering consumers' needs (physical, social and emotional), the meanings of place for consumers can be practical (utilitarian), social (for gathering) and emotional (a home). It is argued that consumers can develop three levels of loyalty: *'cognitive,* *community and ultimate'* (p. 62).

3.4.6 Conclusion

From studying the literature on relationship theory development, we can see that most of the research on relationships has been conducted in contexts other than retail stores. However, these theories can be enlightening for the study of relationships between consumers and their stores.

From the consumer relationships investigated in consumer markets, we can now summarise the features of these relationships. Firstly, due to the variety of contexts, there is a spectrum of interpersonal interactions in the commercial contexts. At one extreme, consumer relationships can contain limited interpersonal interactions. For consumer/brand relationships, for example, in Fourier's (1998) study, the interactions are focused on consumers and marketing activities of the companies and these interactions are not necessarily direct and personal. Thus, the use of interpersonal relationship terms is actually metaphorical rather than a reality (Fournier, 1998). At the other extreme, consumer relationships can represent interactions between consumers and their service providers (e.g., Price and Arnould, 1999). Consumers can have close interpersonal interactions with their service providers and this can create the opportunity for self disclosure. 'Commercial friendships' can be used to describe this type of relationship. This type of relationship can be portrayed as human friendships in social psychology. Other relationships (such as consumer and sales associate relationships and brand community) can be located along the continuum.

Secondly, the meanings/benefits of consumer relationships are different in various commercial contexts. Indeed, the meanings can include: functional support; personal communication; self-disclosure; symbolic meanings shared between members of the community for social identity and consumers' individual identity.

The literature review has also revealed that social exchange theory and symbolic interactionism are the main theoretical perspectives employed to explain consumer relationships in consumer markets. For example, Price and Arnould (1999) explicitly used social exchange theory to explain the friendship between consumers and their service providers (hairdressers). Other studies (e.g., Fournier, 1998; Gainer, 1995; Carlson et al, 2008) have employed a symbolic interactionist approach implicitly.

In the retailing context, we can suggest that consumers interact with retailers at different levels, including the store, the retailer and the brand. The interactions between consumers and the retailer/store fit in to a hypothetical spectrum of interpersonal interactions. These interpersonal interactions can vary from limited to frequent and close. In the retailing context, due to contextual and structural features, the complexity of interaction levels allows for the relationship benefits to be derived from a range of resources. Consequently, these relationship benefits can affect the nature and the forms of consumer relationships in retailing contexts.

Chapter Summary:

This chapter has reviewed the origins of relationship marketing. We have illustrated the debates in terms of the plausibility of relationship marketing and the applicability of relationship principles in mass consumer markets. We also reviewed studies that have investigated different types of consumer relationships in business-to-consumer contexts. The theoretical perspectives and findings from these studies can allow the researcher to be theoretically sensitive in the data analysis process. These theoretical perspectives are also employed in developing the conceptual framework for consumer relationships in retailing/store contexts.

CHAPTER 4

SHOPPING AND CONSUMPTION

This chapter examines the literature on store image, shopping and consumption. The purpose of the review is to explore the theoretical perspectives that have been used to investigate consumers' shopping and consumption experiences. Subsequently, these perspectives can be used to explore the meanings of stores for consumers. Indeed, the understanding of store meanings can become the first step for us to comprehend the nature and the developmental stages of the consumer/store relationships. In addition, the theories and concepts outlined in this chapter will be used in interpreting the themes that have emerged in the data.

The literature review will focus on the following research streams:

- store image research
- shopping and consumption research at the individual level
- shopping and consumption research at the socio-cultural level

4.1 Store Image and Store Meanings

Store image has been an important construct for investigating store meanings for consumers. The review of the literature has revealed that store image definitions can be grouped into three categories: 'holistic/associative-network'; 'cognitive and psychological' and 'store personality' (see Table 4.1). Indeed, the review has also shown that the cognitive/psychological approach, especially attitude-based definitions, has been dominant in store image conceptualisations and operationalisations. This domination appears to continue at present. However, it can be argued that definitions from this approach have not truly appreciated the nuances regarding the store image concept proposed by Martineau (1958). In contrast to brand image conceptualizations that have emphasized 'symbolism' and 'meanings' (see a review in Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990), we can suggest that meaning-based conceptualisations have not been well developed in store image research.

Our aim in this review of store image research is to enhance our understanding of store meanings for consumers. We suggest that Martineau's (1958) conceptualisation and the 'associative network' approach to store image have been the important perspectives for the understanding of store meanings for consumers. Therefore we are going to discuss Martieau's (1958) and Oxenfeldt's (1974-75) store image definitions.

Martineau (1958) suggests that store image construct consists of the following elements: (1) symbolic meanings of the details of the store; (2) subjective perceptions of the functional aspects of the store and (3) psychological attributes of the store to consumers. In other words, Martineau's (1958) store image definition constitutes these aspects including personality, symbolism and psychological elements.

Martineau (1958) has suggested that a store's attributes reflect its personality. In addition, the symbolic meanings of all the attributes as a whole construct the symbolic image of the store. Indeed, it has been suggested that the symbolic image of the store can be associated with store users' images such as: the stereotyping of consumers who shop in the store; the status of the user of the store and the life style of the customers in the store.

Martineau (1958) has also suggested that store attraction lies in the congruence between consumer self image and store image both at the personal (personality and disposition/traits) level and the collective level (social/group identity). Firstly, it is suggested that stores can be regarded as a means for consumers' self expression and self extension. For example, Martineau (1958) described consumers viewing stores as 'my store'. The usage of 'my' indicates that for consumers the store can become part of the self or 'extended self' (Belk, 1988). Therefore, congruity between self and store image is important for consumers in terms of their self concept and self image enhancement. Secondly, the congruity can affect consumers' feelings and emotions associated with retail outlets. For example, Martineau (1958) reported that interactions between consumers and other people in the store (other customers and the store personnel) generated feelings of acceptance, warmth and rejection. We can suggest that these feelings/affections are determined by the congruity between consumers and self concept at the collective level. In addition, Martineu (1958) has suggested that these affections/feelings can be the key factors affecting consumer's store choice.

Martineau's (1958) store image conceptualisation has also emphasised the cognitive and psychological aspects of store image. Store image was described as '*the way in which the store is defined in the shopper's mind*' (Martineau, 1958, p. 47). Hence, Reynold and Gutman (1984) have further interpreted Martineau's (1958) definition by suggesting that perceptions of functional qualities of the store are the outcome of subjective interpretations of physical attributes. This information can be further processed and associated with psychological and intangible attributes of the store (attitude and feelings). Consequently, these consequences (functional and psychological evaluations) are linked with higher levels of cognition, e.g., their shopping values and motivations.

The 'holistic/associative network' approach has also contributed to the understanding of store meanings for consumers. From the 'associative network' approach, Oxenfeldt (1974-75) defined store image as:

> *It is more than a factual description of its many characteristics. It is less like a photograph than like a highly interpretive portrait. ...An image is more than the sum of its parts. It represents interactions among characteristics and includes (or is strongly affected by) extraneous element. It also has some emotional content - i.e., it includes an element of being drawn toward or repelled by the store. It is not simply someone's impersonal observations of a store's characteristics. Thus I consider image a combination of factual and emotional material* (Oxenfeldt, 1974-75, p. 9).

Indeed, this conceptualization has been influenced by Gestalt theory. Gestalt psychologists suggest that people tend to perceive the world around them as a whole. It means not only that objects should be perceived as a whole, but also be perceived in the whole field (objects and contexts). Therefore, individuals' perception of objects varies when the context changes (Weiner, 1985). Indeed, Oxenfeldt's (1974/75) store image definition suggests that store image should be dealt as a whole 'overall picture' including: all the elements (subjective interpretations of store attributes); interactions between the elements; connections between perceptions of store characteristics and extraneous factors (context/total situation) and also emotional components.

The associative network concept requires us to not only regard the store image as a whole but also to take into account the situational and contextual elements for consumers' store image associations. Indeed, we can suggest that consumers' perceptions of the same store may vary in different situations and contexts. Therefore, store image can be personally meaningful for individual consumers only when these extraneous elements are taken into account. It can also be suggested that the holistic concept can also allow us to link store image associations to consumer's lived life experiences and consumption stages. Thus, store image perceptions are beyond consumers' perceptions and experiences of in-store interactions and activities. Indeed, research has identified the extraneous elements that can exert effects on consumers' store image perceptions. These factors include: task definitions (e.g., Van Kenhove et al, 1999); shopping motives (e.g. Morschett, et al, 2005); consumer values (e.g., Erdem et al, 1999); usage situations (e.g., Moye and Kincade, 2002); age (e.g., Joyce and Lambert, 1996); situational influences (e.g., Mattson, 1982; Nicholson, et al, 2002); life style (e.g., Williams, 2004); social class (e.g., Dawson et al, 1990a) and product class (e.g., Cardozo, 1974-75).

Table 4.1: Store Image Conceptualizations

Group 1 Holistic Definitions	
1. Oxfendeldt (1974) It is more than a factual description of its many characteristics. ... An image is more than the sum of its parts. It represents interactions among characteristics and includes extraneous elements. It also has some emotional contents. 2. Marks, 1976 It is not merely the sum of objective individual dimensions associated with the store, rather, a store's image is a composite of the dimensions that consumers perceive as the store, for the part interacts with one another in the consumer's mind.	3. Zimmer and Golden, 1988 It describes not individual traits or qualities, but the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others...an image is not anchored in just objective data and details. It is the configuration of the whole field of the object.
Group 2 Emphasis of Cognitive and psychological elements	
1. Martineau (1958) The way in which the store is defined in the shoppers' mind, partly its functional qualities and partly an aura of psychological attributes. 2. Doyle and Fenwick (1974) The consumer's evaluation of all salient aspects of the store as individually	5. Mazursky and Jacoby (1986) A cognition and /or affect (or a set of cognitions and/or affect) which is (are) inferred either from a set of ongoing perceptions and/or memory inputs attaching to a phenomenon...and which represent (s) what the phenomenon signifies to an individual. 6. Bearden, 1997

perceived and weighted. 3. James, et al, 1976 A set of attitudes based upon evaluations of those attributes deemed important for consumers... 4. Buttle, 1985 An individual perception which can be defined as sum of the cognition an individual has of a store.	Store image reflects overall consumer attitudes toward individual store.
Group 3 Personification: Store Personality	
1. Jain and Etgar, 1976 Store image is the 'personality' a store presents to the public- a 'complex of meanings and relationships serving to characterize the store for people'.	2. d'Astous and Levesque, 2003 ... store personality is restricted to those mental dimensions that correspond to human traits...

4.2 Shopping Orientations and Motivations

The research streams about shopping and consumption can provide insights for the understanding of store meanings for consumers. The literature review shows that shopping activities can be analysed at both the individual and the socio-cultural level. At the individual level, consumers have orientations, motivations and values for their shopping activities. In contrast, at the social and cultural level, consumers hold the commonly shared perceptions of shopping and consumption activities. In sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, we are going to examine the literature of research on shopping and consumption activities at the individual level. In section 4.5, the literature of research on shopping and consumption at the socio-cultural level will be reviewed.

4.2.1 Shopping Orientations

Shopping orientations have been defined by various definitions. For example, shopping orientations have been defined as a '*shopper style*' that reflects consumer needs (Shim and Kotsiopulos, 1993). A further definition is '*shopping patterns*'. It is suggested that these patterns can represent consumer activities, interests and opinions about shopping processes (Moschis, 1992). In addition, shopping orientations have also been described as a result of mental states (Bellenger and Moschis, 1981) and as a result of past shopping experiences and personal value systems (Darden and Dorsch, 1990) (For a good summary of the shopping orientation literature, see Moye and Kincade, 2003).

It has been generally accepted that the sociologist Stone (1954) conducted the first study on shopping orientations. In Stone's (1954) study, shoppers were grouped into four categories: 'economic'; 'personalising'; 'ethical' and 'apathetic'. In marketing literature, consumers' shopping orientations have been explored in various retail sectors. Indeed, these studies have identified shoppers with similar but varying shopping orientations in different contexts (e.g., Darden and Reynolds, 1971; Darden and Ashton, 1974-75; Bellenger and Korgaonka, 1980; Williams et al, 1978; Lumpkin, 1985; Rohm and Swaminathan, 2004; Ownbey and Horridge, 1997; Eastlick and Feinberg, 1999). It can be suggested that five main categories of shoppers have been documented including: 'economic'; 'personalising'; 'ethical'; 'apathetic' and 'recreational' shoppers (For a good summary of shopper typologies literature, see Moye and Kincade (2003) and Westbrook and Black, 1985). We are now going to have a review of typology of shoppers.

The first category of shoppers has been described as 'economic shoppers'. For the economic shoppers, shopping is generally regarded as a duty. Therefore, economic shoppers have a sense of responsibility for their purchase. According to Stone (1954), for economic shoppers, functional store attributes (such as store personnel, price, quality, variety, and the store environment) can determine their store choice behaviour (Stone, 1954). In addition, economic shoppers have more concerns for finance and quality factors. Therefore, they tend to shop around for lower prices (e.g., Lumpkin, et al, 1986) or shop at large chain stores for cheaper prices (e.g., Stone, 1954).

The second category of consumers is called the 'personalising shoppers'. The personalising shoppers usually view the opportunities for interpersonal interactions as the primary consideration for their shopping. For example, Stone (1954) found that personalizing shoppers prefer to shop at local shops where shop owners know the shoppers' names. Thus, personal attachment to store personnel is a crucial factor for their patronage of a store. Whereas, other attributes such as price, quality and selection of merchandise, are of less importance to these shoppers (Stone, 1954). It has also been found that these shoppers regard big stores as impersonal (e.g., Darden and Reynolds, 1971).

The third category is termed the 'ethical shopper'. It is found that the ethical shoppers sacrifice low price or a wider selection of merchandise for their ethical values. For example, some ethical shoppers regard it as an ethical duty to help small local stores to survive against the big supermarkets (e.g., Stone, 1954; Lumpkin, et al, 1986).

The fourth category of shoppers is referred to as the 'apathetic shoppers'. It is suggested that the 'apathetic shoppers' conduct their shopping out of necessity. Hence, convenience of stores is a crucial factor for their store choice. The apathetic shoppers have been described as: (1) being neutral towards shopping or disliking or strongly disliking shopping; (2) getting through the shopping activity with minimum time and effort; (3) having a generally negative view of stores and their policies (Tazel, 1982, Stone, 1954). Shoppers in the apathetic category have also been called 'convenience shoppers' (Rohm and Swaminathan, 2004; Bellenger and Korgaokar, 1980; Eastlick and Feinberg, 1999).

The fifth category of consumers is called 'recreational shoppers'. The recreational shoppers have been described as enjoying shopping and gaining satisfaction from shopping experiences (Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980) and the overall shopping process (Williams, et al, 1978). It is found that these shoppers enjoy variety seeking and seek stimulation (such as novelty, complex or change) (Rohm and Swaminathan, 2004, p.750).

To summarise, shopper typologies have provided basic insights into the meanings of shopping for consumers, with particular reference to the buying aspects of shopping activities. In fact, the shopper typology studies have mainly focused on the purchasing phase and economic exchange for products (Hewer and Campbell, 1997, p. 188; Gregson et al, 2002, p. 597). However, shopping cannot and should not be reduced to buying activities (e.g., Hewer and Campbell, 1997; Tauber, 1972). Thus, further research on shopping activities has explored the shopping motivations that have little to do with the act of buying.

4.2.2 Shopping Motivations

In order to investigate the meanings of shopping, Tauber (1972) has explored the question 'why do people shop?' In addition to the purchase of goods, Tauber (1972) has identified a number of other social and personal motives for shopping activities. These personal motives include '*role-playing, diversion (from the routine of daily life), self-gratification, learning about new trends, physical activity and sensory stimulation*' (p. 47). The social motives for shopping include: '*social experiences outside the home, communication with others having a similar interest, peer group attraction, status and authority, pleasure of bargaining haggling*'(p. 47-48). Hence, the significance of Tauber's (1972) paper attributes to its freeing shopping motives from buying activities (Hewer and Campbell, 1997). Indeed, the shopping motives that Tauber (1972) identified underlie the wider personal and social significance of shopping activities. However, Tauber's (1972) study is based on the trait approach (positivist approach) to consumer research.

Buttle (1992) has criticised the theoretical and methodological approach of Tauber's (1972) study. Buttle (1992) argued that Tauber (1972) assumed shopping motivations were basically internalised states and trait-like dispositions. Moreover, shoppers' motivations were treated as universal laws that can be dislocated from contexts. However, Buttle (1992) suggested that from constructionist perspective, individuals are not '*autonomous*' but are '*embedded in multiple systems which are co-created, maintained and modified in concert with others*' (p. 355). Thus, cultural and social organizations can affect the formation of consumers' roles and the related perceptions. Moreover, social custom can also influence personal practice. Hence, shopping motives can vary across contexts and situations. Indeed, contexts can be used to account for the shopping motivation variances (Buttle, 1992). Thus, Buttle (1992) suggested that in order to understand/explore shopping motives, external conditions, relationships and related goals and purposes need to be taken into account.

By taking the constructionist approach, Buttle (1992) explored consumers' motives of shopping. Buttle (1992) has revealed the variances in terms of consumers' shopping motives. Indeed, Buttle's (1992) research showed that it is important to locate shopping motives in the situations and contexts of consumers' life experiences. In addition, Buttle (1992) identifies context markers. These context markers include '*life-script (the characteristic 'me-ness' of a person), life-style episode (such as shopping for groceries, house items, clothing or gifts), relationships (shopping for or shopping with), gender, and location*' (p. 358). Indeed, for Buttle (1992), context markers not only provide divisions between shopping activities but also divide the meanings of shopping for consumers. For example, Westbrook and Black (1985) revealed that shopping for groceries could not be compared with shopping for cosmetics (‘*episode*’ in Buttle, 1992) or with shopping in a department store (‘*location*’ in Buttle, 1992). It is suggested that ‘episodes’ can divide grocery shopping (‘provisioning’) and other forms of shopping (e.g. clothes). Indeed, research showed that context markers also signify the distinction between shopping viewed as laborious (work) or as a recreational activity (fun) (e.g., Prus and Dawson, 1991).

Following Tauber’s (1972) research, Westbrook and Black (1985) also explored shopping motivations. Westbrook and Black (1985) reconfirmed Tauber’s (1972) consumer shopping motives empirically. In this study, 203 females shopping in department stores were interviewed. This study identified seven shopping motives. These shopping motives are labelled as: *'anticipated utility'; 'role enactment'; 'negotiation'; 'choice optimization;' 'affiliation'; 'power/authority'* and *'stimulations'* (p. 90). We can suggest that shopping motivations can be broadly grouped into various categories: utilitarian (anticipated utility, negotiation and choice optimization), hedonic (stimulations) and symbolic (affiliation). Therefore we can suggest that shopping motivations can underpin shopping values. We can now discuss shopping values in more detail.

4.2.3 Shopping Experiences and Shopping Values

It has been suggested that values are theoretically important for studying consumer behaviour because values can affect consumption behaviour and attitude (e.g., Vinson et al, 1977; Shim and Eastlick, 1998). Indeed, Rokeach (1973) defined value as '*an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence*' (p. 5). According to Rokeach (1973), values determine goals (the ends) that individuals attempt to achieve. Subsequently, values also direct the behaviours/conducts (the means) for the achievement of goals (Vinson, et al, 1977; Pitts et al, 1985, p. 268). Many studies have explored shopping and consumption values. The values revealed by these studies can be broadly divided into two categories: 'utilitarian' and 'expressive'. First we are going to examine the 'utilitarian' value.

Utilitarian value reflects the utilitarian and hedonic dimensions of consumer behaviour and motivation, as Babin et al (1994) suggested. Indeed, research revealed that shopping can provide both utilitarian and hedonic values (Babin et al, 1994; Babin and Darden, 1995). Utilitarian behaviours have been described as '*task related and rational*' (Babin, et al, 1994, p. 646). Indeed, these behaviours have also been associated with a '*work mentality*' (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982), product acquisition (Jin and Kim, 2003) and functional needs (Sheth, 1983). Hedonic experience is portrayed as '*increased arousal, heightened involvement, perceived freedom, fantasy fulfilment, escapism*' (Babin et al, 1994, p. 646). Hedonic behaviours are generally associated with experiential-motivation (Kim et al, 2005) and non-functional orientation (Sheth, 1983). Thus, in general, utilitarian values reflects the task-related shopping experiences and hedonic values are found in the shopping experiences itself (Babin and Attaway, 2000; Jones et al, 2006). In 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, we have discussed consumers' shopping orientations and motivations. Indeed, many of these orientations and motivations are associated with the utilitarian (functional) dimension of shopping and consumption. We are now going to review the hedonic value of shopping and consumption in more detail.

Hedonism is one dimension of shopping and consumption value. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) defined hedonic consumption as *'those facets of consumer behaviour* *that relate to the multi-sensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of one's experiences with products*' (p. 92) This definition has focused on the hedonistic experiences in product usage contexts. According to Hirschman and Holbrook (1982), consumers respond to external stimuli and generate multi-sensory images ('*historic imagery by recalling an event and fantasy imagery*', p. 92). Consumers also experience emotional arousal (which can entail *neurophysiological, expressive and experiential* components) and these can further generate emotions such as '*fear and joy*' (p. 93). Thus, we can suggest that the hedonic values involve the 'expressive' element.

The hedonic values have also been explored in store context through the studies of shopping experiences. For example, Cox et al (2005) empirically examined and revealed various forms of shopping enjoyment: '*mingling with other customers*'; '*bargain hunting*'; '*browsing*'; '*sensory stimulation*'; '*being pampered*' and '*kinaesthetic experience*' (p. 251-252). In terms of *browsing*, Bloch et al (1989) defined these activities as '*a search activity that is independent of specific purchase needs or decisions*' (p. 13). In browsing activity, shoppers gain pleasure from '*just looking*' (e.g., Bowlby, 1985). It is argued that despite the processes involved in obtaining information about products, 'just looking' can be enjoyed as an end-in-itself. With regard to '*mingling with other customers*', research has shown that consumers seek social interactions and social support from a '*third place*' such as stores (e.g., Westbrook and Black, 1985; Rosenbaum, 2006). For example, consumers can achieve these through the communication with other customers (e.g., Tauber, 1972) and by obtaining social recognition (e.g., Paswan and Troy, 2004). It is argued that stores can provide space for interactions between customers. In terms of '*bargain hunting*', it can be argued that the meaning of bargain hunting has more importance than economic and utilitarian value (e.g., Stone, 1954; Bellenger and Korgaokar, 1980). For instance, bargain hunting can also bring pleasure to consumers (e.g., Schindler, 1989; Mano and Elliot, 1997). With regard to '*sensory stimulation*', it is suggested that store environments can provide the stimulus for pleasant experiences, fun, enjoyment, and excitement (e.g., Babin et al, 1994; Wakefield and Baker, 1998; Lehoten and Maenpaa, 1997). In addition, products can also be a source of sensory stimulation that can provide fantasy and escapism (e.g., Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). Finally, in terms of '*being pampered*', this idea refers to the social status and positions attained through the service provided by sales people. The last source of shopping enjoyment suggested by Cox et al (2005) is the public place for consumers to move about and exercise. In addition to these sources of shopping enjoyment another source of shopping enjoyment, described by Cox et al (2005), is '*delight*'. It is suggested that shopping delight can be created by interpersonal interactions (information, efforts and engagement) especially with the empowered employees in the retail context (Arnould, et al, 2005, p. 1142).

Arnould and Reynolds (2003) have also provided a detailed analysis of shopping motivations that underlie the hedonic shopping enjoyments described above. The shopping motivations can be grouped into six categories: *'adventure shopping'; 'social shopping'; 'gratification shopping'; 'idea shopping''; 'role shopping' and 'value shopping*' (p. 80-81). For Arnould and Reynolds (2003), '*adventure shopping*' refers to shopping for '*stimulation, adventure, and the feeling of being in another world – through self-expression'* (p. 80). This type of shopping motivation has been explored by others and termed '*sensory stimulation*' (Tauber, 1972; Westbrook and Black, 1985) and '*browsing*' (Jarboe and Mcdaniel, 1987). Campbell (2004) suggests that shopping can be a process of self discovery and self fulfilment. With regard to '*social shopping*', consumers derive pleasure from socializing and bonding with family and friends through shopping. Indeed, the motivations for social shopping are related to affiliation, seeking acceptance and affection in the social interactions. Arnould and Reynolds (2003) has suggested that social shopping can be associated with '*personalizing shopper*' (e.g., Stone, 1954), '*psycho-socialising shopper*' (Moschis, 1976), '*social motives for shopping*' (Tauber, 1972) and '*affiliation motivation*' (Westbrook and Black, 1985) (p. 80) and '*companion*' (Haytko and Baker, 2004). Dholakia (1999) and Woodruffe (1997) have also explored the social motives for shopping. These motives can be reflected through '*being with, talking to and being seen by other people*' (Harris, et al, 2000; Harris and Baron, 2004). '*Gratification*' shopping refers to shopping in order to '*relieve stress, ease some negative mood, and get some special treat'* (Arnould and Reynolds, 2003, p. 80), *to seek comfort, safety, and freedom*' (Haytko and Baker, 2004). '*Idea*' shopping involves getting ideas and information and developing trend consciousness (Haytko and Baker, 2004). '*Role*' shopping entails shopping for others (Tauber, 1972) and deriving enjoyment from role fulfilling. '*Value*' shopping refers to shopping for values, sales, discounts and bargain hunting. The underlying pleasure is a sense of conquering a challenge and personal achievement (Arnould and Reynolds, 2003, p. 81).

To summarise, the utilitarian value (utilitarian and hedonic dimensions of consumer behaviour/motivation) is one aspect of meanings of shopping for consumers. In our discussion, we have categorised the hedonic value of shopping and consumption as one aspect of utilitarian value. However, from the discussion, we can suggest that hedonism can also be associated with 'expressive' values. For example, it can be argued that many shopping motivations such as: 'sensory stimulation'; 'adventure shopping' and 'social shopping' etc are driven by expressive needs. We are now going to discuss the expressive values of shopping and consumption.

4.3 Shopping Experiences and Self-Identity: Aesthetic Perspective

Before we move on to reviewing the expressive values of shopping and consumption, we are going to take a brief look at the cultural background for shopping and consumption in the Western capitalist society.

It has been suggested by sociologists that one important social phenomenon and cultural trend occurring since the 1960s has been the 'subjective turn' (Taylor, 1991) or the 'turn to the self' (Heelas, 1996). Heelas (1996) has illustrated this notion that due to the cultural and societal changes, many people in Western society frequently turn to themselves and their private life for the meanings of personal existence. Indeed, it has been suggested that the '*self-ethic*' is one important feature of modern Western society (Tipton, 1982; Heelas, 1996, p. 156). In addition, it has been suggested that there is a spectrum of the self-ethic (Tipton, 1982). At one end, the self-ethic involves the '*practices of utilitarian individualism*' (Tipton, 1982; Heelas, 1996, p. 156). The utilitarian individualism has been manifested as individuals' '*seeking to satisfy own needs and wants*' (Tipton, 1982, p.6; Heelas, 1996, p. 156). We can suggest that the utilitarian and hedonic dimensions of shopping and consumption discussed in sections 4.1 and 4.2 can be regarded as manifestations of utilitarian individualism. At the other end of the spectrum, the self-ethic has been described as '*expressive individualism*' (Tipton, 1982; Heelas, 1996, p.156). Expressive individualism has been described as individuals endeavouring to find richer and authentic meanings and striving to being in tune with their self, human nature and inner feelings (Heelas, 1996, p. 156). In fact, in addition to utilitarian values, research supports the notion that individuals seek expressive values through shopping and consumption activities. We are now going to review the research on expressive values of shopping and consumption.

4.3.1 Shopping Experiences and Self-Identity: Aesthetic/Symbolic Perspective

In sociology, one theoretical perspective for investigating the expressive values of consumption and shopping is the aesthetic/symbolic perspective (e.g. Bourdieu, 1984). Shopping and consumption can be viewed as means to construct and maintain consumers' self concept at both the personal level and group level. Indeed, consumer research supports the notion that shopping provides the opportunities for consumers to engage in self construction, self discovery and self confirmation through the choice of the place to shop, the product they purchase and use (e.g., Crawford, 1992; Falk and Campbell, 1997; Sandikci and Holt, 1998; Baker, 2006).

Hence, in order to understand the self construction and discovery process in stores, consumers' lived experiences in the co-created marketplace (Sherry, 1990) can be explored from the symbolic interactionist perspective. Thus, in order to understand consumers' in-store experiences, we need to consider the following aspects: the symbolic functions of store environments for consumers; the interactions between consumers and various environmental aspects in stores and consumers reactions to these interactions. Thus, the focus is to understand the symbolic functions of store attributes (objects, symbols and people) for consumers. Indeed, Ernst Cassirer, a German philosopher of culture, has provided a framework for us to understand the symbolic functions of objects (Allen, 2002). According to Cassirer's theory, symbolic functions of objects include three aspects: *'expression'; 'representation' and 'signification'* (Allen, 2002, p. 39). Therefore, in order to understand meanings of stores for consumers' self concept, we are going to focus on these three aspects of symbolic functions of store environments.

The first aspect of symbolic function, 'expression', focuses on '*experiential forms*' (Thrift, 1999; Allen, 2002, p. 49). It is suggested that feelings and emotions can occur when people relate to and respond to objects (Thrift, 1999; cited by Allen, 2002, p. 49). In addition, '*the unformed feelings*' generated through individuals' reactions to objects (Allen, 2002, p. 50) can be described as aesthetic appreciation. Indeed, it has been argued that the '*aestheticization*' process occurs to individuals in their every day life (e.g., Featherstone, 1991; Charters, 2006).

We can suggest that consumers can have aesthetic experiences in various store environments. For example, Bitner (1992) has suggested that consumers have internal responses to store environments. Consumers' internal responses are initiated from cognitive responses. These cognitive responses are generated from consumers' subjective beliefs, categorization and interpretation of symbolic meanings of objects in shopping environments. Bitner (1992) has further suggested that the initial cognitive responses can further trigger emotional and behavioural responses. Luomala (2003) also described the structural and connotative dimensions of store environments, arguing that these dimensions reflect the aesthetic characteristics of artefacts in a store. These objects can also generate consumers' affective /emotional responses. Indeed, consumers' experiential responses to store environment can be connected to '*an aesthetic encounter*' and this response can be regarded as an '*issue of pleasure*' (Charters, 2006, p. 249).

In addition, we can also suggest that aesthetic appreciation can reflect the interplay between store attributes and consumers' tastes. Here, taste can be referred to as individuals' '*embodied preferences*', which contain '*implicit knowledge, skills, and dispositions*' (Holt, 1998). In this sense, taste can be equated to the dispositional aspects of extant self concept (Holt, 1998). Indeed, taste can be '*imbued into thinking,* *feeling and acting across the course of everyday life*' (Henry, 2005, p.766). Hence, we argue that consumers can confirm or refute their self concept through their aesthetic experiences in stores. Campbell (2004) has further developed this notion (see discussion in 4.4).

The second symbolic function, 'representation', is more concerned with the '*shared cultural meanings*' of objects (Allen, 2002, p.51). It has been suggested that objects generally possess sign values and contain social (shared) meanings. In addition, these shared meanings of the signs and symbols can be associated with various groups. '*The imaginative play of signs can provide access to a particular world, be it cultural, political or economic*', Allen (2002, p. 51) suggests. Thus, it is suggested that shopping and consumption can be a means for consumers to express their social/group identity. Edwards (2000) described this notion:

> *By mixing of aesthetic concerns in the style, presentation and aesthetic meanings of goods (culture as art) with wider questions of the social practice of shopping and consumption's importance in the formation of identity or even in its psychoanalytic significance (culture as a way of life)* (p. 29).

Indeed, products/goods (the style, presentation and aesthetic features) contain shared meanings (symbolic). Products can become the agency to convey socially shared symbolic meanings. Through the choice of goods and by sharing these symbols, consumers can obtain group identity (affiliation) and fulfil role performance and role transitions.

Research revealed that people, products and artefacts in stores contain shared meanings for particular social groups. For example, Rosenbaum (2005) explored the meanings of store environments for ethnic consumers. The research shows that artefacts in store environments can entail symbolic meanings for the members of specific ethnic groups. Indeed, the symbolic meanings shared across members of these ethnic groups are explicitly the sources for consumers' group identity (Rosenbaum, 2005). Hence, it has been argued that the modern market place is not confined to interpersonal interactions in a specific place but becomes an abstraction for structures of social relationships (Chaney, 1996). We can therefore suggest that shopping in certain environments can become the means of forging social relationships and social identity. In addition, research has revealed that the issue of recognition is crucial. For example, Williams et al (2001) empirically explored spatial inclusion and (self) exclusion issues of various retail outlets. The study has revealed that most people were discouraged from shopping in certain retail spaces because of their feelings about the type of people they might encounter. Weber (1983) has also emphasized that status (social identity) rests upon interpersonal recognition-distinction (Henry, 2005, p.767).

We can further suggest that the construction of social identity and social relationships in store environments can reflect the interplay between individuals' subjective taste and social groups' objective taste. Indeed, taste is regarded as the 'embodied' preference (Henry, 2005, p.766). The 'embodied' nature of preference signifies the social nature of taste. Bourdieu (1984) has emphasized the socially and culturally determined nature of taste. Thus, in addition to the idiosyncratic (subjective) nature of taste, the objective taste needs to be emphasised. The objective taste has been described as '*a generally acceptable 'standard of taste*' (Hume, 1757/1998) and '*objective evaluative norms*' (Holbrook, 1998) (Charters, 2006, p.248). Thus, taste also reflects the principles for aesthetic appreciation shared by a group of people. These principles are actually used to make sense of the meanings of symbols. Therefore, it can be suggested that aesthetic appreciation/judgement is '*certainly not* *fully objective. But neither are they fully subjective, since they are based to some extent on criteria capable of being objectively determined*' (Solomon, Pruitt, and Insko 1984, p. 116; cited by Charters, 2006, p. 248). Indeed, Bourdieu (1984) emphasised that '*tastes are the consequence of generative principles which define for the actors' concerned meaningful universe*' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 60). Therefore, taste can be seen as a mechanism through which individual distinctions can operate along a wider question of social conformity (Edwards, 2000, p.37).

It has also been suggested that in a culture where appearance and image are important, our bodies can become objects/symbols. Therefore, it is also argued that, more than any other elements, clothing and accessories can play the role as carriers of our body, our self, our personality and our status (Corrigan, 1997, p.176). According to Bourdieu (1984), at the individual level, taste (cultural capital) exerts an effect on the pattern of consumption (such as what to wear, what to eat and where to dine, etc). Indeed, research has shown that shopping and consumption patterns can provide means for self concept construction, role performance and group affiliation. Hence, due to its social nature, taste at the group level, can become a way for achieving distinction among groups at the collective level.

The third symbolic function of objects is signification. Signification refers to '*the systematic manipulation*' of abstract symbols. The manipulation of symbols is based on individuals' '*formal reasoning, cognition and abstract judgment*' (Allen, 2002, p. 52). Indeed, research has revealed the importance of the abstract judgment of store environments and the stereotyping of store customers (e.g., Luomala, 2003) for consumers' shopping activities. Indeed, we can argue that signification process is crucial for the symbolization of objects/symbols for shared meanings (representation function of objects) and individuals' interpretation of these meanings invested in objects and symbols shared across the group.

Indeed, 'signification' (the manipulation of symbols) is associated with investing meanings to surface (e.g. concrete objects) of social phenomenon (Chaney, 1996). Chaney (1996) has suggested that due to the significance attached to the objects of social phenomenon, the manipulation and interpretation of these objects becomes crucial (p. 102). Firstly, an emphasis upon the surface is manifested in the importance of appearance. Appearance here refers to the way in which objects or people present themselves or being presented. The second issue is the negotiation between the surfaces and individuals' choices. Individuals' choices are affected by his/her interpretations (cultural forms and social cues) of the surfaces. The third issue is termed 'sensitivity' (Chaney, 1996). Sensitivity is concerned with the ability to perceive the objects/symbols representing the affiliation for an identifiable group (for example certain ideas, values or tastes in music, food or dress) (Chaney, 1996, p.126). Sensibility is important for individuals to be able to identify with the communal identity. He further suggested that '*taste can be used in a variety of ways to exemplify a perceived community or communal bond*' (Chaney, p. 129). Thus, there are three interconnected elements with respect to the '*signification*' process: objects and the invested meanings; negotiation between individuals and the objects/symbols; and sensitivity of the association between the objects and the group. In addition, the sensitivity issue can be associated with what Bourdieu (1984) has called 'symbolic violence'. Symbolic violence refers to social exclusion and discrimination between the in-group and out-group through the manipulation of the symbols and objects at group level. Indeed, it has been argued that consumption is connected to 'gate keeping' and through which more traditional and new class/group positions and economic positions are maintained. Symbolic violence also aims to define and control taste itself (Edwards, 2000, p. 38).

The discussion of symbolic functions of objects has revealed that in the store environments, various interplays take place between store artefacts (symbols), individuals' judgements and interpretations of the symbols, and meanings of these symbols shared at the group level. Indeed, these interplays can affect consumers' feelings /responses to store environments and consequently influence their personal self concept and their group affiliation and identification in the store contexts. In addition, these interplays can also represent the interplays between three forces '*social structure; individual consumers and marketing agents (working in the corporate economy and as the independent brokers*)', as Zukin and Maguire, 2004 (p. 175) suggested. Indeed, Zukin and Maguire (2004) have defined shopping and consumption as an institutional field. In this field, it has been argued that retailers play the role of a marketing agent (even '*cultural intermediary, like the style experts and image consultant*', Edwards, 2000, p. 37). We are now going to discuss the role of retailers in this institutional field.

4.3.2 Retailers' Role

It has been argued that retailers can provide the cultural resources for consumers (e.g., Pioch and Schmidt, 2000; Arnould, 2005). In addition, Arnould (2005) has also suggested that cultural resources provided by retailers can represent the potential connections between retailers' and consumers' operant resources (a type of cultural resource including *'skills, knowledge, competence, values, and ideologies'*) (Arnould, 2005, p. 90). Indeed, store environments can represent both subjectivity (being meaningful at the individual level of interpretation) and inter-subjectivity (delivering the shared meanings at group level). In addition, Sherry (2000) has stressed the dialectical relationships between an individual's interpretation of meanings of objects/symbols (subjectivity) and the shared meanings of these objects (inter-subjectivity) (p.277) in store environments. Therefore, the two sides (retailer and consumers) can often work together to create the meanings of retail environments (e.g., Woodruffe-Burton, et al, 2002; Casba and Askegaard, 1999; Turley and Chebat, 2002). Hence, retailers, as cultural intermediaries, have often solved the problem of determinism of meanings of store environments either from the retailer side or from the consumer side.

Allied to the concept of 'cultural intermediaries', Bourdieu (1984) has developed the concept of 'cultural capital':

> *In fact, the different ways of relating to realities and fictions... are very closely linked to the different possible positions in social space and consequently, bound up with the system of dispositions (habitus) characteristic of the different classes and class fractions* (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 5-6).

Indeed, cultural capital can manifest as dispositions (taste) at the individual level. However, fundamentally cultural capital possesses the social nature and therefore reflects social space/position. For example, Edwards illustrated cultural capital as:

> *Middle class knowledge and expertise for correctness in matters of taste and style at dinner to issues of access and control across a range of institutional contexts as well as the middle-class role in making contacts and networking as a key mechanism in the maintenance of social status and position* (Edwards, 2000, p. 37).

There is always tension between social structure (e.g., class and group identity) and individuals' personal self concept. Bourdieu (1977) has used the term 'habitus' to describe this tension. On the one hand, habitus can be manifested through tastes. Taste can be expressed by the products we have and in where we go to shop. Moreover, habitus reflects the '*dialect of the internalization of the externality and the externalization of the internality*' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72; Cited by Chaney, 1996, p.

59). The idea of habitus is that it is a '*system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures*' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). Through this mechanism, objective requirements of cultural order (at group level) are inscribed as a predictable course of action for individuals. We can use a notion of habitus to explain what at first appears to be the idiosyncratic variety of cultural choices. The term 'habitus' is used to '*describe the central conduit between the objective positions (classes) and patterns of practice*' (Henry, 2005, p. 766).

In addition to functional and hedonic dimensions, self concept (individual level and the group level) can also be regarded as personal projects that consumers strive to achieve in shopping and consumption processes. Therefore, we can suggest that retailers can provide the style, the rules and the space (the social and cultural field) which can represent the 'distinction' taste shared by the social or cultural group (Bourdieu, 1984). These distinctions can represent '*class/social status*' and '*social configuration*' of group identity (Cova, 1999). Consumers take their positions, monitor their behaviour and realize their projects in the field with the aid of the resources provided by retailers.

To summarise, in modern capitalist Western society, commodities are transformed from their utility and materiality into symbols and signs representing social structure and social division. Consumption is as much individual and personal as it is socially structured. Consumers' taste determines personal identity and taste also forms group/social identity through individuals' social conformity and social identification. Bourdieu's concepts (tastes, cultural capital and habitus) can therefore explain individual choices and practices in terms of the wider social practice and social significance.

4.4 Shopping Experiences and Self-Identity -Humanistic Approach

Shopping and consumption can be viewed as means to construct and maintain consumers' self concept at both the personal level and group level. This is the notion derived from the symbolic perspective on shopping and consumption. We can argue that the symbolic perspective on shopping and consumption has mainly emphasised the social nature of taste. Bourdieu (1984) has suggested that taste has both individualistic and social nature. In contrast, theorists (e.g., Campbell, 2004) have stressed the individualistic nature of taste and the experiential aspects of shopping and consumption. Indeed, shopping and consumption can become a means of self fulfilment (particularly relating to authenticity) (e.g., Taylor, 1991; Campbell, 2004). We can term this perspective for understanding shopping and consumption for consumers' self concept as the 'humanistic approach'.

The humanistic approach basically suggests that shopping and consumption experiences can be a means for self-discovery and self fulfilment (Campbell, 2004). Campbell (2004) states:

> *Exposure to goods and services can tell us who we are (our taste), and 'the self-same exposure fulfils the even more vital function of enabling us to be reassured that our self is indeed 'authentic' or 'real'. Hence while what I desire (and also dislike) helps to tell me who I am, the fact I do desire intensely helps to reassure me that I do indeed exist* (p. 32).

Campbell (2004) has suggested that individuals can confirm/refute their taste through their experiences (feelings and emotions) during their interactions with/responses to products and services. Indeed, taste can represent and express individuals' embodied preference and thus constitute individuals' dispositions/traits (self concept). Thus, individuals can confirm/refute their self concept through their experiences in respect of interactions and responses to products and services. In addition, by choosing where to shop and what to buy, individuals can gain a sense of having the power to control their wants, desires and experiences. Indeed, Campbell (2004) has also suggested that individuals can get in touch with their 'inner/real' self through their personal experiences. In addition, personal experiences (feeling and emotions) have the highest authority for obtaining authenticity. Indeed, through shopping and consumption, individuals can exercise their authority to experience their wants, desires and to experience their self and their authenticity (Campbell, 2004, p 40-41). To summarise, Campbell (2004) emphasises that individuals' shopping and consumption experiences can be a means to gain the sense of being their 'real' self by connecting with their inner feelings. Indeed, the self concept described in Campbell (2004) can be categorised as '*experiential perspective*' to self concept (Stevens, 1996, p. 150).

According to Stevens (1996), the experiential self concept has drawn in various theoretical perspectives to self concept: (1) phenomenological approach to self concept (focusing on individuals' subjective feelings and experiences in the environments); (2) existential perspective (emphasising the dynamic nature of human existence and the meanings for personal existence) and (3) the humanistic perspective (emphasising individuals as intentional agents who can take intentional actions to create meanings from the environments) (Stevens, 1996, p. 151). From this perspective, individuals can be regarded as the '*experiencing person*' and have the capability to experience and create '*lived realities of existence*' (p. 183). Indeed, human beings possess the capability to experience and create 'li*ved realities of existence*' (p. 183). In addition, human beings also possess an ability to '*reflect on the act of experiencing', or 'capacity for reflexive awareness'*. This ability can be termed *'reflexivity'* (p.183). Indeed, the ability of reflexivity can enable individuals to be more alert to his/her experiences and existence and to reflect on the 'meanings' of their life experiences. In addition, instead of passively responding to the environments, individuals as active agents can create meanings for their personal existence. Equipped with the reflexivity ability, individuals can experience self fulfilment and be aware of his/her power of creating realities and pursuing his/her personal goals.

Campbell (2004) has also stressed that his theory can be applicable to specific ideal contexts such as (1) the absence of need to consider either the feelings or the demands of others and (2) the sheer volume and variety of stimuli on offer. Indeed, these ideal contexts are emphasised as the constraints of his theory's applicability. It seems that Campbell's theory has focused more on the hedonistic aspects of shopping and consumption and emphasised the self-indulgent nature of shopping and consumption in the Western society. However, we argue that Campbell's theory does not portray consumers as hedonistic, self indulgent and selfish pleasuring seekers. Indeed, Campbell's (2004) theory on shopping and consumption emphasises the expressive values of shopping and consumption. Indeed, it can be suggested that Campbell's (2004) theory emphasises that shopping and consumption can be a device for individuals to discover and experience their 'real self' (feeling of who they are) through their exposure to products and services. This notion can be further illustrated from the following points.

Firstly, Campbell (2004) has argued that 'taste' can be one manifestation of the uniqueness of the individual (her/his original way of being human). People can experience feelings and emotions when they relate and react to objects. These experiential feelings are generated when the individuals' taste interplays with the objects. Equipped with the capability of reflexivity (Stevens, 1996), individuals can experience and reflect on the meanings of these experiences for their self concept. Thus, shopping and consumption can enable people to connect with their feelings and one aspect of inner self (taste). Thus, it can be suggested that in shopping and consumption processes, consumers can experience experiential forms of the self concept.

Secondly, shopping and consumption can be regarded as a means for self fulfilment. In addition, instead of being viewed as being debased, trivialised or self indulgent, it can be argued that self fulfilment achieved through shopping and consumption can be significant for individuals' authenticity.

Before we discuss the significant role of shopping and consumption for individuals' self fulfilment and authenticity, we can first have a look at what authenticity means in the literature. Taylor (1991) has described 'authenticity' as '*being true to oneself*' (p. 15); '*being in touch with our moral feelings' and 'selves as being with inner depths'* (p. 26). In addition, in order to attain authenticity, individuals can have '*a horizon of issues of importance*' (p.40) that can give meanings for self definitions for individuals (Taylor, 1991). Indeed, Taylor (1991) further illustrated the important issues which give meanings for individual existence including: '*the demands of nature, the needs of fellow human beings, or duties of citizenship, the call of God, or something else that matters*' (p.40). Taylor (1991) has also emphasised the importance of social relationships for individuals' authenticity. For Taylor (1991), individuals' identity needs recognition by others. Thus, relationships, particularly love relationships, are crucial for individuals' self discovery and self confirmation (Taylor, 1991, p. 49). Other theorists also share the notion that social relationships are important for individuals self expression (Martin, 1983; Heelas, 2001). Indeed, from the humanistic views of self and authenticity, it can be suggested that individuals define their self according to the issues that are significant/meaningful for their existence. Heelas (2001) has also suggested that with the individual self as the centre of the self concept, self can be opened up into other horizons/dimensions: *'relational', 'humanitarian' 'eco' and 'cosmic'* (p. 50). Therefore, it can be suggested that if self fulfilment can be achieved through experiencing and reflecting on these horizons and dimensions for self definitions, the form of self fulfilment is not necessarily trivialised or debased.

Indeed, in consumer research literature, research has revealed that consumers can achieve their life tasks and personal projects through shopping and consumption. Consumer personal projects and life role tasks can actually reflect these horizons of significance for consumers' self definitions. Therefore, we can suggest that these life role tasks and personal projects can reflect important issues for consumers. By achieving them, consumers can define their self and experience their inner feeling (real self). Thus, it can be argued that shopping and consumption can become a device for consumers for their self discovery and self fulfilment. Shopping and consumption can create expressive values for consumers. Indeed, this kind of self fulfilment can reflect consumers' expressive needs. One aspect of expressive needs has been described as attaining *'self discovery, richness of personality, variety and depth of relationships', Martin, 1983, p.16;* Heelas, 1992, p. 141).

To summarise, in addition to generating utilitarian values, shopping and consumption can also create expressive values for consumers. Consumers can experience aspects of self concept (such as dispositions) and self fulfilment. Indeed, shopping and consumption can meet consumers' expressive needs and thus be a significant means for consumers to experience various aspects of authenticity.

4.5 Shopping and Consumption: Socio-Cultural Level

At the broader socio-cultural context, it has been suggested that there are shared perceptions of shopping and consumption activities. Let us explain these perceptions in more detail.

4.5.1 Shopping and Consumption as Gendered Activity

Shopping and consumption can be viewed as a gendered activity. Firstly, research has revealed that women constitute the majority of shoppers. In addition, women spend more time shopping, visiting more stores and purchasing more products (Campbell, 1997, p. 168).

Secondly, shopping is regarded as a gendered activity because of people's basic attitude towards shopping. For example, Campbell (1997) has empirically demonstrated that shopping in modern capitalist Western society is regarded as a sub-role of the status of housewife. This notion has also been emphasised in marketing literature (e.g., Thompson, 1996; Woodruffe-Burton, et al, 2002). For example, research has shown that women accept shopping as a legitimate activity that belongs to their gender role (Jansen-Verbeke, 1987). In addition, it has been argued that shopping has often been perceived by many men as an '*effeminate*' (Campbell, 1997, p.168) and 'a female' activity (Buttle, 1992, p. 364).

Thirdly, women and men are different in terms of shopping styles and shopping ideologies. Campbell (1997) has empirically investigated shopping ideologies ('*a system of beliefs and attitudes which serve to define and justify the activity*', Campbell, 1997, p.169). Campbell (1997) has suggested that the ideology of shopping consists of the form of shopping, the way of defining shopping and shopping activities. Campbell's (1997) research has revealed strong associations between shopping and femininity. Indeed, Campbell's (1997) research has revealed that shopping ideologies can become a means to protect gender identity. Basically, Campbell (1997) has suggested that for men, shopping is a means to an end of acquiring goods in the existence of a need. However, there is no intrinsic value in the shopping activity itself. Whereas for women, shopping not only is the means to an end of acquiring goods for satisfaction of the 'need', but also has (recreational/hedonic) value (the satisfaction of wants and desire) in itself. Therefore, in terms of attitudes to shopping, males comprehend shopping as a 'work frame' while females view shopping as a 'leisure frame' (at least as far as non-food shopping is concerned) (Campbell, p. 170).

However, it must be noted that Campbell's (1997) dichotomy of shopping ideology between the male and female has not been supported by research conducted in marketing. For example, research has revealed that women take Christmas shopping as important 'work' whereas men saw it as 'play' (Fischer and Arnould, 1990). However, shopping for 'working' women was neither work nor leisure (Nana, 1996). Miller (1998) has also explored the provision nature of grocery shopping. Miller (1998) argued that it is absurd to portray consumers as 'self-seeking hedonists'. The research has also shown that female shoppers have to undertake the provision tasks and indeed, regard these tasks as their responsibility of '*housewifery*'. Therefore, it is argued that shopping cannot be regarded as 'undifferentiated activity' (Hewer and Campbell, 1997, p. 189). For example, Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) pointed out that consumers are neither 'problem-solvers' nor 'enjoyment-seekers'. Indeed, Buttle (1992) has also identified the contextualised nature of shopping motives. Therefore, the dichotomy of shopping ideology described by Campbell (1997) has to be considered in various contexts and situations. Therefore, we can argue that the distinctions of shopping attitude need to be made not only to divide men and women, but also to differentiate the shopping between different products, consumer life-style and consumption occasions.

4.5.2 Shopping and Consumption as Social Practice

It has been suggested that shopping can be regarded as a social practice. In terms of social practice, Taylor (1974) described it as:

> *These (social) practices are not just in the minds of the actors out there in practices themselves, practices which cannot be perceived as a set of individual actions, but which are social relation, of mutual action* (p. 48)

It has been suggested that this notion of consumption recognises that shopping and consumption meanings are not only in consumers' minds but are also 'out there' in the social practice containing shared notions. A lot of research supports the notion that shopping and consumption practice entails social and cultural meanings. For example, Miller (1998) explored Londoners lived shopping and consumption experiences by using the ethnographic approach. The research also revealed that shopping is not only a means of expressing but also constituting relations of love and caring. Gregson (2002) suggested that Miller's research has revealed that the meanings of shopping can represent the process of the translation of meanings of commodity through consumption rather than shopping per se (Gregson, et al, 2002).

Since the late 1980s, the social and cultural meanings of shopping and consumption have been recognised. CCT (Consumer-culture-theory) has been the research stream representing this perspective in consumer research (for an example of a good review see Arnould and Thompson, 2005). For example, it has been suggested that consumption should not be broken down by '*artificial analytical distinctions between 'public' (the high street, the mall, the department store) and 'private' consumption* *spaces (the home, the garden)'* (Crewe, 2000, p. 278). Indeed, Belk (1975) has conceptualised consumption into interdependent practices that entail the continuous process of self and group articulation and consumers' communication of other social meanings (Schau, 1998). Indeed, it has been argued that consumer behaviour includes '*the process of consuming (pre-acquisition, acquisition, and post-acquisition'*, according to Schau (1998, p. 38). Therefore, in order to understand the totality of the consumer experience, these stages should not be separated and should be treated as a continuous process. Therefore, in order to understand store meanings for consumers, we should extend the domain of enquiry from consumers' shopping to consumption phase and thus, '*everyday social relationships*' and the wider contexts can be taken into account. Indeed, it has stressed that '*shopping and its . . . meaning is negotiated in different ways, at different times, in different places and spaces' (Bailey, 1998, p. 21; Crewe, 2000, p. 278*).

Chapter Summary:

This chapter has examined the literature on store image, shopping and consumption from marketing, consumer research and sociological perspectives. It brings our focus to the understanding of motivations and values of shopping and consumption for consumers. These understandings can help us to gain insights into the meanings of stores for consumers. Indeed, these meanings can become the basis for the initiation and development of relationships between consumers and their stores.

CHAPTER 5

SELF, IDENTITY AND SELF-CONCEPT

This chapter reviews the literature on 'self', 'identity' and 'self concept' from social psychology perspective. It also includes ideas from the consumer research literature. This chapter also examines self regulation, self monitoring, self construal theories and the motivations for self and identity construction. The theories and concepts can then be used to illustrate the meanings of stores for consumers derived from their shopping and consumption experiences. Hence, the understanding of these meanings of stores for consumers can become the first step for us to comprehend the nature and the developmental aspects of consumer/store relationships. In addition, the theories and concepts outlined in this chapter will be used in interpreting the themes that emerged in the data.

It is obvious from reviewing the literature that 'self', 'identity' and 'self concept' have been one of the most researched and debated concepts. Therefore, we have to admit that our review is selective. Indeed, the researcher does not intend to indicate that the approaches employed and interpretations produced are definitive or exclusive. Subsequently, the criteria of the selection of theories have been the extent to which they can help the researcher to gain insights into participants' self and identity issues in terms of their shopping and consumption activities in their daily life experiences.

5.1 Self Concept: Social Psychology Perspective

It has been generally suggested that there are three levels of self-representation: (1) personal/individualised self; (2) interpersonal/relational self and (3) collective/group self. Table 5.1 summarises these three levels of self-representation.

Table 5.1 Levels of Representations of Self Concept (Source: Brewer and Gardner, 1996, p.84)

Level of analysis	Self-concept	Basis of self-evaluation	Frame of reference	Basic social motivation
Individual	Personal	Traits	Interpersonal comparison	Self-interest
Interpersonal	Relational	Roles	Reflection	Other's benefit
Group	Collective	Group Prototype	Intergroup comparison	Collective welfare

The three levels of self concept representations will be used as a framework to organise the review of the theories of self concept. First, we are going to summarise the theories in respect of personal self.

Personal Self

In the literature, different aspects of personal self have been explored. Our review has focused on the private self, the presenting self, the social self, the phenomenal self and the reflexive self.

5.2 Private Self

Private self has been referred to as individuals' personality and traits (Epstein, 1973; Kihlstorm and Cantor, 1984) and individuals' '*attitudes, values, goals, beliefs, interpersonal relationships and styles*' (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 13). Thus, within the category of private self, we are going to discuss various dimensions of personal self concept.

5.2.1 Material Self and Extended Self

The material self is one dimension of personal self (James, 1890). Indeed, James

(1890) has illustrate what the material self means:

> *A man's self is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account. All these things give him the same emotions* (1890, p. 291; cited by Burns, 1980, p.8)

For James, the material self is primarily constituted of a bodily self. Moreover, the material self can be extended to include things and people that individuals see as '*his*' (Burns, 1980, p. 8). In addition, people's emotional investment can indicate the extension of self to his possessions. Thus, Rosenberg (1979) illustrated that when objects can provoke subjective experiences of 'me' or 'mine' and self-conscious emotions, such as pride or shame, these objects can be referred to as '*ego-extensions*'. These objects can define the boundary of self and become an aspect of self concept (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 38). In addition, Levin (1992) emphasised the flux nature of the material self (p.76).

5.2.1.a Extended Self

In marketing literature, Belk's (1988) seminal paper explored the 'material self'. Belk (1988) introduced the term '*extended self*'. Belk (1988) summarised the major categories of the extended self as '*body, internal processes, ideas, experiences, and those persons, places and things' to which one feels attached'* (p. 141). Thus, extended self refers to anything individuals can describe as 'his' and into which he invests in emotions. Belk (1988) also illustrated three ways through which possessions can become part of self or self extension based on Sartre's (1943) theory. In essence, self extension to material objects depends on people's control and transformation of these objects. One way is through 'controlling', which means to '*appropriate and control an object for our own use*' (p. 150). The second way is through 'creating', where it is suggested that '*buying an object is another form of creating the object*' (p. 150). Here objects can be turned into a part of the self through users' usage of the objects. The third way of self-extension is through 'knowing' the objects. Belk argues that '*our intimate knowledge of a community, store or a book makes them not only 'ours' but also parts of self*' (p. 151).

5.2.2 Spiritual Self

The spiritual self is another dimension of the personal self (James, 1890). For James, the spiritual self, as the centre for the empirical aspects of self concept, is regarded as the source of people's '*intellectual, religious and moral aspirations*' (Burns, 1980, p. 7) and individuals' '*ability to argue and to discriminate, our moral sensibility, our conscience, and our will* (Levin, 1992, p. 77). Indeed, the spiritual self has been referred to the *'core self'* and hence is '*the most enduring and intimate part of the self*' (Levin, 1992, p. 77). Thus, the core self has also been described as human nature which is defined as '*what human beings are fundamentally like*' (McAdams and Pals, 2006, p. 205).

In fact, for James, the '*the spiritual self is concreteness, that which most gives me the same sense of being me*' (Levin, 1992, p. 77). However, from social science perspective, 'spiritual' or 'real' self cannot be empirically assessed (Heelas, 1996). In addition, people can get in touch with their inner selves through their experiences and reflexivity (Stevens, 1996). Moreover, inner self can be manifested through the issues the individuals concerns and the projects that are significant for their self definition (e.g. Heelas, 2001; Taylor, 1991). Indeed, we can gain insights into individuals' inner selves by exploring people's experiences and their personal projects (See discussion in Section 4.4, p. 74-78).

5.2.3 Extant Self

One dimension of the personal self can be referred to as the '*extant self*'. Rosenberg (1979) has defined the extant self as '*what the individual sees when he/she looks at himself/herself*' (p. 8). Rosenberg (1979) further delineated the constituents of the extant self-concept including '*social identity, dispositions and physical characteristics*' (p. 10).

For Rosenberg (1979), the socially recognised categories with which individuals identify can become '*a real part of what he feels himself to be*' (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 12). Thus, these categories can become part of the self concept, which can be termed 'social identity'. In addition, Rosenberg (1979) suggests that social identity elements can form social models (containing the social expectations or stereotypes for the social identity categories). These social models include socially recognised ideals and these ideals can function as a standard for self assessment. Indeed, individuals internalise these ideals and form the attitudes, values, norms, and codes of behaviour (pp. 12-14). Thus, it is suggested that when these ideals are internalised, they can become aspects of dispositions and traits. Thus, Rosenberg (1979) further argued that the society or sub-cultural groups share these traits and dispositions (associated with social categories/social identities). Therefore, it can be suggested that these traits and dispositions are social in nature. Thus, it can be suggested that the extant self can be viewed as one social aspect of the personal self.

5.2.4 Desired Self and Undesired Self

Another dimension of personal self has been referred to as the 'desired self' and 'undesired self'. If the extant self refers to the empirical self (*who we think we are*), the desired self can be referred to as '*what we wish to be like*' (Rosenberg, 1979, p.

40) and the undesired self as '*the selves we are afraid of becoming*' (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Wurf and Markus, 1991, p. 40).

The desired/undesired self provides the referent points against which the extant self is viewed and judged. In addition, all the content and structure of the extant self concept can be used to characterise the desired and the undesired self (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 38). According to Rosenberg (1979), there are three dimensions of the desired self. The first aspect is referred to as the '*idealised image*' (p. 40). However, Wurf and Markus (1991) stressed that the idealised self can represent the '*unachievable self-conceptions that led to neurotic strivings*' (p. 42). The second dimension is called the committed image and described as what '*we must, we ought or we should be*' (Wurf and Markus, 1991, p. 40). The third dimension has been referred to as '*moral image*' (p. 40). The moral image can include '*conscience*', *'role demands' and 'idiosyncratic self-demand'* (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 43). In addition, the desired/undesired self can be regarded as a '*motive force*' because people are motivated '*by the wish to attain, to maintain, or to retain a desired self*' (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 45).

5.2.5 Conative Psychology, Self Concept and Symbolic Consumption

The conative perspective of self concept has been suggested by Little (1993). This perspective stresses the meanings of personal life tasks and personal projects for individuals. Life tasks are referred to the tasks that individuals are dedicated to during a specific period of time (Cantor, et al 1987, p. 1179). Compared to life-task, personal projects lack a '*normative or mandated*' feature and are more self-expressive (Little, 1993). Indeed, individuals can derive meanings for self concept from their personal projects and life tasks. These projects serve as the externally visible expression of an individual's sense of who he/she is (Little, 1993; Bruner, 1990). Finally, Little (1993) has suggested that there are four functions of personal tasks/life role tasks including

'*(1) self-expressive (convey something self-defining) (2) self-enhancement (raise or lower sense of self-worth), (3) 'self-exploration' (clarify personal values and beliefs, or change relatively enduring dispositions and habits) and (4) self-extension (new, future, possible selves are brought into being)*' (p. 166-167).

Research has revealed the importance of the conative perspective of self concept for our understanding of consumers' shopping and consumption behaviour. For example, research has suggested that life transitions/life status changes can result in changes to consumers' consumption patterns (e.g., Andreasen, 1984). Indeed, life transition can signify self extension which involves a new aspect of self concept bringing into being. Lee et al (2001) suggested that two perspectives provide insights into the association between life transition and changes of consumption patterns. Firstly, it has been argued that when individuals undertake new life tasks, they have to adapt to the cultural expectations and normative presentations for these life tasks/roles. Consequently, individuals have to redefine their role-related self concept. Therefore, it is argued that consumption can become a means to communicate individuals' self concept by using symbols which contain the shared meanings (e.g., Schouten, 1991). These products and symbols can be used to demonstrate individuals' intentions and also the capability of fulfilling the cultural expectations for these life roles. This can ultimately result in a change of consumption patterns (e.g., Gentry et al, 1995) and the disposal of some possessions (e.g., McAlexander, 1991; Young, 1991).

The second perspective is stress theory. It has been argued that life transitions can bring about stress (either external or internal) that demand that individuals change their behaviour patterns. It has also been argued that one source of stress can come from the cultural expectation for these new roles. In order to reduce stress, consumers have to meet these new expectations related to new roles. One way is through changing consumption patterns. Empirically, Lee et al (2001) examined the effects of life transitions on consumers' retail patronage preferences. The research suggests that stress is an important variable for understanding patronage change. The possibility that consumers change their patronage preference to search for support from marketing providers is possible. These supports can be regarded as social support. These social supports can also reduce stresses generated by life transition (Lee et al, 2001, p. 36).

5.3 Presenting Self

In 5.2, we have reviewed various aspects of private self. It has been suggested that in addition to private self, another dimension of personal self is the '*presenting self*' (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 45).

5.3.1 Presenting Self

It has been suggested that the presenting self refers to the type of person whom individuals wish to appear in public. In terms of the form and content, it is suggested that the presenting self include elements from '*specific traits*' to '*broader social types*' signifying '*status attitudes, values, actions and goals*' (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 46).

Rosenberg (1979) suggested that on the one hand, the motives for presenting selves can be '*social approval and social conformity*' (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 43). Corresponding with these motives, individuals might put on an act rather than attempt to be themselves. Thus, the presenting self has been described as more '*variable, contextualised, and situation-bounded*' (p. 46). Indeed, the presenting self has been defined as the self that we '*present on the social stage that intentionally match (or diverge) from self pictures we hold inwardly*' (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 46). The presenting self has also been referred to as 'the *public self, the individual self as* *presented to and perceived by others, whether or not it corresponds to the inner, private self*' (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 13). We can suggest that the definitions of presenting self have been stressing the possible inconsistency between what the individuals present and they really are.

On the other hand, '*self-consistency and self esteem*' can also be the motives for the presenting self (Rosenberg, 1979, p.43). Thus, it is suggested that people have a more or less consistent self we select to present to the world. It is argued that there is not necessarily conflict between the private self and the presenting self. The core of self-presentation is trans-situational (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 50). Rosenberg (1979) has further suggested reasons for the trans-situational consistency of self concept. Firstly, individuals are not aware of the rules of self presentation consciously. The norms for self presentation in interpersonal interactions are fairly standardised. Thus, these norms can be normative or represent the shared practice within subgroups. In addition, for social status, there are demands or rules imposed shared by the society or subgroups (Rosenberg, 1979, p.50). Secondly, in addition to being functional, the presenting self needs to be '*comfortable and congenial, situated to their presentations and consonant with their extant self-concepts*' (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 50). This can be described as the self consistency motive. Thus, this motive can demand the consistency of individuals' self presentations. Indeed, it has been suggested that the presenting self can be consistent but with situational variations.

5.3.2 Dramaturgical Models for Presenting Self

Goffman's (1959, 1967) dramaturgical model is another theoretical perspective of the presenting self. This theory suggests that the individual puts on a 'show' for others by managing the impressions he gives others about himself (Tedeschi, et al, 1971; Schlenker, 1980). It has been argued that through social interactions, the requirements, the shared rules and social expectations for roles and social identities can be formed. In addition, social interactions require people to follow these shared rules and social expectations required for social roles and social identities. Thus, people manage their behaviours to enhance/smooth social interactions (e.g., Backman, 1988; McCall and Simmons, 1978; Reed II, 2002). Thus, it can be argued that impression management can be seen as a socialisation process. Social identities (roles) become the basis/clues for behaviour in specific social circumstances. These roles provide the cues for others and also express who he/she is. Thus, the adaptation of self to different roles can facilitate social interactions and processes wherein each knows what others are performing (Burns, 1980, p. 17):

> *Each person must develop considerable skills in reading the symbolic cues which give meaning and definition to the situation so that the correct social identity is chosen, ... social order and self are inseparable; social reality and self-integrity demand that we orchestrate our identity with the situation* (Burns, 1980, p. 17).

However, Leary (1993) has described that for many years, impression management has had an image problem. This is because many researchers viewed impression management as inherently deceitful and manipulative. When engaging in self-presentational acts, people say and do things they do not really believe to make impressions that would '*curry favour*' or achieve goals (Buss and Briggs, 1984) (Leary, 1993, p. 129). Nevertheless social psychologists (e.g., Gordon and Gergen, 1968) have argued that the determinants of self-presentation can be both personal and interpersonal. Leary (1993) has argued that:

> *When Goffman wrote of self-presentation, he referred to as an individual's presentation of a pre-existing, subjective sense of identity or even to a public presentation that is mediated by an inner self, but rather to a public persona that is constructed in a particular social encounter* (p. 127).

It is also widely accepted that self-presentation is not necessarily deceptive. Indeed, it is the result of the interplay between the private self and the interpersonal factors (norms, target's values and public information about the individual) (Leary, 1993, p. 129).

5.3.3 Minimal Self

Lasch (1984) described how impression management in the postmodern society has led to the '*minimal self*'. Firstly, he has argued that consumerism has discouraged individuals from depending on their own resources and judgment for their self concept in social circumstances. Secondly, he has also argued that individuals are under observation by other people. Indeed, this often leads to individuals measuring themselves against others and seeing themselves through others' eyes. As a result, Lasch (1984) argued that social life could be regarded as a 'play' or 'show'. Individuals are under constant scrutiny by the audience according to his possessions, his clothes and his 'personality'. Therefore, according to Lasch, this type of society makes individuals pay unprecedented attention to superficial impressions and images. Consequently, the self becomes indistinguishable from its surface/objects. Overall, Lasch argues that the self concept lacks depth and meaning and becomes '*flattened and minimal*' (p. 30).

However, we can argue that Lasch (1984) minimal self concept has over-emphasized the social approval and social conformity motives for self-presentation. It has also ignored the needs for self-consistency in presenting self. Indeed, this concept has also over-stressed the interpersonal factors (social circumstance) for impression management. It can also be argued that it has failed to recognise the socialisation and internalisation process of the shared rules and meanings for social identity. Indeed these internalised rules and meanings become the components of the personal self.

Thus, we can suggest that this minimal self concept has not acknowledged the role of the personal/private self in impression management.

5.4 Social Self

In sections 5.2 and 5.3, we have reviewed two dimensions of the personal self (private self and presenting self). Indeed, the review has demonstrated that the development of these aspects of self concept can be regarded a process of socialisation and internalisation of the external norms and models through social interactions (Rosenberg, 1979). Indeed, a stream of research has investigated how individuals' social interactions with others can shape the social aspects of personal self (Harter, 1996, p. 3; McGuire and Padawer-Singer, 1976, p. 743). This approach to self concept can be termed the 'social self'. The symbolic interactionist approach has been the main theoretical perspective to the study of social self.

5.4.1 Social Self

James (1890) suggested that social self is one component of the personal self. James (1890) wrote:

> *A man's social self is the recognition, which he gets from his mates. ... We have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favourably, by our kind* (James, 1890, p. 293; Berndt and Burgy, 1996).

James's social self concept has explained the sources of social selves. Individual's social self can reflect others' perceptions of him/her (Levin, 1992). Thus, for James, we have as many social selves as we have social relationships (Levin, 1992). Indeed, for James (1890), individuals' perceptions of the extent to which he/she is accepted by specific groups and other people can affect the individuals' social self (Berndt and Burgy, 1996, p. 171). It is suggested that the significance of others' acceptance for individuals' social self concept highlights the centrality of human need for others' recognition. It can be argued that individuals might have some freedom for arranging the perceived importance of recognition from significant others/groups, but they are not entirely free from the need for recognition and acceptance which can give them a sense of social self (James, 1890; Burns, 1980). Due to the existence of multiple social selves, there might be some contradictories between these social selves as Levin (1992) described:

> *My social self, my other-reflected perception of self and conversely, my presentation of self to others, may be harmonious or may be conflictual. Since I play many roles and elicit many different responses, it is likely that my social selves will not be altogether harmonious or consistent. The degree of integration of the social selves varies from person to person, but some degree of 'splitting', or disharmony between social selves, is usual* (Levin, 1992, p. 77).

To summarise, we can suggest that James' social concept has indicated the importance of others' recognition for social selves and the potential contradictions between social selves. James' social self concept has been developed by further studies. Studies on social self concept have explored how the social relationships and social interactions have shaped the social self concept. We are now going to discuss Cooley's 'looking glass' self and Mead's symbolic interactionist approaches to social self.

5.4.2 Cooley and Looking Glass Self

Cooley has described the looking-glass self as:

> *In imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it. A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principle elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgement of the appearance; and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification* (Cooley, 1902, p. 159; cited by Burns, 1980, p. 14).

Cooley (1902) has emphasised the '*subjectively interpreted feedback from others as a main source of data about the self*' (Burns, 1980, p. 13). The individual's social self was formed through the internalisation of others' opinions about himself/herself. Indeed, it has been suggested that for Cooley, the looking glass self is formed through the interactions between the individual and various primary groups. The features of the primary groups are 'face-to-face association', 'relative permanence' and 'intimacy' (Burns, 1980, p. 14). In addition, it has also been suggested that for Cooley, the motive of self-assessment are crucial for the development of social self concept (looking glass self) (Reed II, 2002, p. 245).

Cooley's (1902) looking glass self concept has reflected the dialectic relationship between self and society. It has been suggested that the attitudes of others can actually shape the social self concept. Therefore, it has been argued that Cooley's looking glass self has paved the way for a more developmental perspectives on how the attitudes of others have to be incorporated into the social self concept (Harter, 1996, p. 4). We are now going to discuss this notion in more detail.

5.4.3 Mead and Symbolic Interactionist Approach to Self Concept

George Mead (1934) has defined self concept as:

> *We appear as selves ...as we ourselves take the attitude that others take towards us. We take the role of what may be called the 'generalized' other. And in doing this, we appear as social objects, as selves* (Mead, 1934, p. 270; Cited by Harter, 1996, p. 4).

It can be suggested that Mead's social self concept has further extended Cooley's looking glass self. As we discussed in Cooley's looking glass self concept, the primary groups can shape and affect individuals' social self concept. In contrast, in Mead's theory, individuals come to adopt the perspectives of more generalised groups for self concept (Harter, 1996, p. 4). Epstein (1973) suggested that generalised others' attitudes and reactions to the individuals' conducts become a source of individual's internal regulation. The internalised regulations from the generalised others can then provide guidance for individual behaviour without the existence of external pressures (Epstein, 1973, p. 406).

From Mead's description, it can be suggested that self concept as an object is formed through social interactions. Through social experiences, individuals have to learn how others perceive the world. Individuals therefore respond to others accordingly in order to anticipate others' reactions. Individuals therefore take the role of generalised others. Indeed, in this process, individuals respond to themselves and can develop self attitude. This self attitude is consistent with the attitudes/opinions expressed by others (Burns, 1980, 15-16; Epstein, 1973, p. 406).

In addition, it has been argued that Mead's theory has suggested that self concept consists of numerous 'elements of selves', which mirror aspects of the structure of social process. These selves can provide means for individuals to fit into social order. Indeed, these elements are now referred to as social identities. These social identities provide the links between self and society (Burns, 1980, p. 16). In addition, it is suggested that these social identities are corresponding to social roles. According to Mead, there are as many as social selves as there are social roles (Burns, 1980).

To sum up the analysis of the social self concept, social self can be defined as 'roles'. These roles can be associated with significant others (primary groups, as in Cooley's looking glass self). These roles can also be linked to the 'generalised others' (social groups, as in Mead's social self concept). Indeed, these roles can represent social relationships in general (James, 1890; Levin, 1992). In consumer research, it has also been suggested that consumers can be defined as the 'role player' (for self concept) in specific relationships (primary group and social groups). Therefore, we have a separate 'me' for each of our roles and these roles can have a hierarchy of significance (also a notion derived from James) (Solomon, 1983, p. 319).

5.4.4 Consumers' Symbolic Consumption Behaviour

We have discussed how the social self concept can be associated with roles in particular social relationships. Solomon (1983) has argued that in order to play various roles, material symbols and products can be used because these symbols are culturally associated with a particular identity (role). Therefore, consumers purchase goods or services not only for the functional benefits but also for the symbolic meanings of the products/services. Thus, these symbols and products can be used to convey consumers' self concept (dispositions and taste).

Solomon (1983) suggested that products/services become social stimuli which can be manipulated for the situational self images and fulfil role performances. In addition, these symbols can also become the societal referents. These signs and symbols can be used to communicate and associate with the groups (primary or generalised). Thus, by using these symbols, individuals can forge the social relationships that are desirable and important for the individual. It has been argued that in the arena of consumption, individuals interact with the society at large and also with their significant reference groups through their relations to symbols, goods and services. These symbols contain the symbolic meanings shared by the society (reference groups). Indeed, these goods and services become the medium/agency that can be used to communicate symbolically between the individual and his significant referents (Leigh and Gabel, 1992, p. 27-28). The motivation for the symbolic purchasing behaviour is the affiliation with reference groups. Therefore, symbolic purchasing behaviour is associated with relational selves (primary groups) and collective selves (social groups).

5.5 Phenomenological Approaches to Self Concept

The phenomenal self is another aspect of the personal self, which can reflect the functional and situational variability of self concept. The phenomenal self can be derived from subjective experiences in immediate situations. The fundamental view of phenomenological approach is that self concept is unobservable. Therefore, the phenomenal self can only be derived from individuals' perceptions based on their inferences and interpretations of observed behaviour of others in social circumstances. Indeed, the subjective perceptions of individuals' experiences and the external world are the basic content from which the phenomenal self concept is developed and maintained (Burns, 1980, p. 31; Reed II, 2002, p. 244). In addition, the phenomenal self is affected by individuals' motives, goals, expectations and particular social circumstances (e.g., Gergen, 1971; Markus and Wurf, 1987; Turner, 1982; Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 15).

The phenomenological approach to self concept was first developed by Lewin (1936). This approach was developed from field theory (Burns, 1980). According to Burns (1980), Lewin (1936) provided an explanation of individual behaviour in terms of field theory. Lewin's (1936) theory suggests that individual behaviour comes out of a '*total field*', which consists of the external field forces and the individual's internal life space. Externally, this field includes all the external forces and elements. In addition, the individual is also one aspect of the field and is always subject to field forces. Internally, individuals have a 'life space' region, which includes '*the individual's universe of personal experiences (such as goals, evaluations, ideas, perceptions, etc)*' (Burns, 1980, p. 32). Self concept is at the core area of the individual's internal life space. Indeed, even though individual behavioural directions are determined by the variables in the individual's internal life-space (Burns, 1980, p. 32), it has been pointed out that in Lewin's (1936) theory, self concept is regarded as being passively subjected to the external field forces (Snygg and Combs, 1949; Burns, 1980).

Thus, Burns (1980) described that Snygg and Combs (1994) further developed the phenomenological approach to self concept. This theory can be associated with the 'existentialist' approach to self concept. Thus, instead of being passively subject to the external forces, self is regarded as '*a purposive agent engaged in a never-ending business of becoming*'. Thus, self concept can develop through the interplay between the individuals' internal perceptions and personal projects and the things and/or people in the environments (Snygg and Combs, 1949, p. 309-12, Burns, 1980, p. 34). Snygg and Combs (1949) introduced the 'phenomenological field' concept. The phenomenological field possesses three components: (1) t*he individuals' perceptions of the circumstances*; (2) *all those perceptions which a person holds about himself under the circumstance (the phenomenal self)* (3) *the self concept (a stable, important and characteristic organization composed of those perceptions which seem to the individual to be basically him (Snygg and Combs, 1949),* as Burns (1980, p. 35) summarised.

Snygg and Combs (1949) used the phenomenological field to emphasise the '*fluid organisation of personal meanings that exist for any person at any moment of time*' (Burns, 1980, p. 31). The phenomenal self can be derived from interplay between the phenomenological field and the core self. Thus, the phenomenal self consists of the part of the individuals' perceptions of the environment, which the individual can experience as part of self concept. Thus the phenomenal self is derived from individuals' experiences and perceptions of the circumstances and therefore, it has significance only within the totality of his experience (Snygg and Combs, 1949; Burns, 1980, p. 34). In addition, it is suggested that the phenomenal self can be regarded as a system (Lecky, 1945). The individual's perception of himself is at the core and the rest of the system resolves around it. Individuals are motivated to maintain self consistency and integrity. This motive can be reflected through their behaviours (Lecky, 1945, p. 29; cited by Burns, 1980, p. 34). Thus, self concept from this approach is viewed as '*the nucleus of a broader organisation which contains incidental and changeable as well as stable personality characteristics*' (Epstein, 1973, p. 406).

5.5.1 Rogers' Self Concept and Positive Self Regard

Rogers (1951, 1959) has also defined self concept as:

> *Perceptions of the self including such elements as perceptions of one's characteristics and abilities; perception of self in relation to others, to environment, various aspects of life; values attached to these perceptions which are associated with experiences and objects; goals and ideals perceived as negative or positive valences* (Rogers, 1951, p. 136; Rogers, 1959, p. 200) (cited by Burns, 1980, p. 36-37).

It is suggested that Rogers' humanistic approach has emphasised that individuals '*become more intensely aware of one's feelings and experience*' (Stevens, 1996, p. 153). For Rogers, self concept can emerge from the environment through the interactions between individuals' internal perceptions (such as characteristics, abilities, relationships, values, goals, and ideals) in relation to the social environments. Self concept is the most significant factor to determine individuals' responses to the environments. In addition, Rogers has also suggested that individuals have: (1) the need for positive self regard from others - that is for warmth, liking, respect, sympathy, and acceptance; (2) the need for positive self regard from themselves (or self esteem) learned through internalisation or introjections of experiences of positive regard by others (Burns, 1980, p. 36-37).

It has been suggested that there are two distinct reference frames for the phenomenological approach to self: (1) individuals as an objective observer of the external world. Indeed, individuals can derive the perceptions of others evaluations of themselves; (2) individuals' subjective perception of himself/herself. This distinction, as argued by Snygg and Combs (1949), is important for understanding individual behaviour because the realities between these two references are not always the same and are often contradictory (Reed II, 2002, p. 244). Indeed, according to Rogers, positive self regard depends on others' evaluations. Therefore, incongruence between the two reference frames for self concept may lead to discrepancy between self consistency and self esteem (positive self regard). This can result in incongruence between self and subjective experience.

One way for individuals to cope with incongruence between self and experience is to be cognitively selective or to distort (or to be in denial) of experiences by incorrectly interpreting these experiences. It is described that distortion is employed to alter the meaning of the experience. In addition, the aim of distortion is to make the experience consistent with the self (Burns, 1980, p. 34). In order to avoid conflict from incompatible ideas and situations, people tend to perceive only those elements that they want to. Indeed, the directions in which the perceptions are oriented depend on a person's past experience, expectation, present needs and current self conceptions (Burns, 1980, p. 31). From this perspective, it has been argued that self concept's primary function is to act as a selective filter, the permeability of which is determined by individual developmental history and the nature of the environment relative to the person (Burns, 1980). Indeed, Rogers (1951) has stressed this point:

> *as experiences occur in the life of an individual they are either symbolized, perceived and organized in some relation to the self; ignored because there is no perceived relationship to the self structure; denied symbolization or given a distorted symbolization because the experience is inconsistent with the structure of the self* (p . 503; cited by Burns, 1980, p. 31)

Reed II (2002) suggested that perceptions are selective and often biased as a result of distortions engendered by motives, goals, attitudes, and defence mechanisms (Bruner and Goodman, 1947; Judson and Cofer, 1956; Vincake, 1952). Indeed, this perspective locates the phenomenological approach to self concept somewhere in the middle of the continuum of an internal psychological view and external socially situated view (Reed II, 2002, p. 245). It has been suggested that possible selves developed by Markus and Wurf (1987) can link the cognition and motivation, which can affect the orientation of self concept. Thus, possible selves can be located along the continuum of internal and external perceptions of self.

5.5.2 Possible Selves

As discussed in 'phenomenal self' section, self concept can contain a malleable and fluid part. However, there is also a stable core (Markus and Kunda, 1986). Individuals have to cope with the core selves and the phenomenal self, which reflects individuals' perceptions and experiences in immediate environments. Indeed, Markus and Wurf (1987) have suggested that behind the flux part of self, there is a cognitive structure. Self concept can become the mechanism to respond to the immediate environments and to provide a structure to maintain the consistency and coherence of individuals' self-related experiences. Thus, self concept is described as '*a system of affective-cognitive structure (or schemas) about the self. These self-schemes can lend structure and coherence to the individual's self-relevant experiences*' (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 955).

Indeed, there are two important concepts in Markus and Wurf's (1987) cognitive approach to self concept: (1) possible selves and (2) working self concept.

Possible selves have been described as '*a wide repertoire of self-representation*' (Wurf and Markus, 1991, p. 43). One component of possible selves has been described as '*a subset of all the available self-conceptions, active and accessible for regulating behaviour at any moment*' (Wurf and Markus, 1991, p. 43). In addition, another component of possible selves are referred to the cognitive components such as hopes, fears, goals and threats in the self-relevant specific form, meanings and directions (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954). Moreover, these cognitive structures can also define the features of self concept (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 965).

Another concept is the current or 'working self' concept. The working self concept has been described as, '*derived from the set of self-conceptions that are presently active in the thought and memory*' (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 957). The activation of self concept depends on what self conceptions have been activated before, or what have been dominant in particular social circumstances and what has been deliberately invoked in response to an experience, event or situation (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 957).

In addition, it has also been suggested that possible selves can be activated by social situations. The possible self concept can link cognition and the motivations. It is suggested that possible selves can determine activation of working self concept. Then, the working self concept is self concept which is activated in the immediate situations.

Indeed, the possible selves concept implies potential dilemmas between the 'core self' and 'many situational selves'. In this theory, the cognitive components contained in possible selves can bridge motivation and cognition. In addition, the social environments can trigger these cognitive components, which can in turn activate the possible selves and working self concept. The phenomenal self concept for the immediate situation can be formed and activated. Possible self is a cognitive system whose functions are to cope with self concept issues in social environments.

5.6 Reflexive Self and Authenticity

We have discussed various aspects of self concept in previous sections. From a social psychological perspective, the development of self concept is determined by the interactions with and the reactions from others. Therefore, self-assessment depends on external criteria (cultural expectations and models for social roles/identities). Self as observed object can represent the mode of self concept which has been dominant at the cultural level since 19 centuries (Logan, 1987). However, in the West, particularly since the 1960s, many individuals have turned to themselves for meanings for their self concept (Adams, 2006; Heelas, 1996a). Indeed, it has been argued that individuals constantly seek their self by turning to themselves and turning 'within' (Giddens, 1991; 1992; Beck, 1992; Logan, 1987, Heelas, 1996).

The change of self orientation, at least for the well-educated people or social elite (Heelas, 1996a; Logan, 1987), has led to 'reflexivity' notion of self concept. Indeed, Heelas (1996a) has suggested that the reflexive thesis can be located on a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum, individuals' reaction is to increase their reflexivity and to embrace '*the wide ranges of possibilities of life ... free to construct their own narratives of identity*' (Heelas, 1996a, p. 17). In the middle of the spectrum, some individuals still draw meanings and significance from the external authority but also seek out some self reflexivity. This can be called "*the order-giving reflexive self*" (Heelas, 1996a, p. 17). At the other end of the spectrum, there are individuals who still cling to habits and 'habitus' by creating new forms of community (Heelas, 1996a, p. 17).

The 'reflectivity' notion of self concept can be associated with the 'experiential perspective' to self concept. According to Stevens (1996), the experiential perspective to self concept has emphasised that human beings have one capacity, the 'reflexive awareness' which allow them be aware of their experience and existence and also to question the meaningfulness of their lived experiences. In addition, we are aware of our 'agency (i.e., *we can initiate action*') and our ability to make choices and bring about changes (Stevens, 1996, p. 183). Thus, from existential perspective to self concept, it can be suggested that individuals have the capacity of reflexivity and have situated freedom and autonomy. In addition, self is a never-ending process of becoming. However, fundamentally human beings have to face the existential concerns:

> *We have to form some kind of response to the awareness that we are finite, that we have the ability to choose to act in different ways, that we play a part in creating who we are; even if our response is only to seek to ignore such awareness. Facing the fact of the ever-changing nature of our being and our own eventual non-existence is, from an existential point of view, to respond authentically. Again, we act authentically if we acknowledge our freedom to make choices and 'own' (or take responsibility for) our decisions and actions, rather than assuming that these are (or allowing them to be) determined for us* (Stevens, 1996, p.184).

Indeed, it has been pointed out that not all people are concerned with these existential issues everyday. There are individual and cultural differences in terms of the importance and the responses to these issues. However, it is argued that these issues are '*intrinsic to the human condition*' (Stevens, 1996, p.184).

5.6.1 Fragmented Selves

It has been argued by some theorists that we have entered the era of late modernity (or post-modernity) (Giddens, 1991). It has been suggested that a key feature of late modernity has been the overflow of self-relevant information. For example, Markus and Nurius (1986) have argued that in late modernity, contemporary technology has provided individuals with the resources to construct their identities. These resources can include the models, images and symbols derived from many sources - such as the media, different cultural institutions and individuals' immediate social experiences. As a result, self concept can become more fluid and malleable. Thus, the possibility of the use of these resources has provided individuals with the freedom of becoming (self definition and self determination). However, this freedom has also made individuals uncertain about their self and this can further undermine one's self concept (e.g., Baumeister, 1987; Gergen, 1996; Kernis and Goldman, 2003). Consequently, individuals have to deal with various challenges imposed by late modernity by incorporating into their self concept a myriad of 'possible selves' in social contexts.

According to the above discussion, we can suggest that in late modernity, self concept has become a problematic issue. One problematic issue can be described as the tension between the real self (the stable and consistent part of self) and the situational/possible selves. Indeed, it is suggested that this tension can reflect one characteristic of modernity, i.e. the ambivalence of self (Weigert, 1988; Warde, 1997). Indeed, this ambivalence can be caused by '*identity pluralism as well as mobility*' (Weigert, 1988, p. 269). Therefore, this modern ambivalence has made the authenticity of the modern person very problematic (Weigert, 1988).

5.6.2 Authenticity and Ambivalence

The true self and the unique inner self has been referred to as '*authenticity*' (Berman, 1971; Hochschild, 1983; cited by Weigert, 1988). It has been described as '*an assessment of the meaning and significance of what one is and does; the motivational implications of beliefs, especially beliefs about the self*' (Gecas, 1986, p. 141, cited by Weight, 1988, p. 271). Indeed, authenticity is regarded as a master motive in the domain of self concept (Gecas, 1986; Weigert, 1988). Indeed, many theorists have emphasized the importance of authenticity for humans (e.g., Taylor, 1991; Heelas, 1996; 1996a; 2001). Indeed, due to the importance of authenticity for individuals, Weigert (1988) has suggested that in late modernity, individuals have to live with ambivalent identities. In addition, people also need to find strategies to achieve authenticity. Therefore, we are now going to discuss the strategies individuals can use to achieve some kind of authenticity.

5.6.3 Coping Strategies of Modern Ambivalence of Self Concept

Weigert (1988) has suggested that there are two fundamental types of authenticity: 'existential' and 'eschatological'. 'Existential' authenticity has been described as:

> *in the modern society/world there is no given priori for moral good, and instead it is created by the free decision made by the engaged person and therefore the individuals have to search for an authentic moral identity within a life narrative that is socially constructed and mythic guide (cf. Charme, 1984, p.125, 126; Zimmerman, 1981)* (Weigert, 1988, p. 273).

Therefore, construction of self concept is described as individuals' search for meaning and morality. In this process, individuals can exercise their autonomy in existential sense. Subsequently, individuals can have more freedom in the construction of their own self concept. However, this process is challenging because individuals have to make constant judgments and choices of values and morality. The definition of values and morality depends on the individuals' choices and judgements. We can see that this type of authenticity requires individuals turning within themselves and being constantly reflexive. Indeed, we can suggest that this kind of authenticity requires the first type of reflexivity suggested by Heelas (1996a) (discussed in p. 103 in the thesis).

In the Western society, people often have to face a paradox. On the one hand, individuals are conscious of their power and autonomy to choose. They can be aware of their freedom. On the other hand, the cultural and religion systems which traditionally provided guidance for moral principle have lost their credibility (Heelas, 1996; Stevens, 1996). Consequently, there are no essential standards for values and morality. Indeed individuals have to face the difficulty of making choices and judgement because they don't always know what to choose especially when they attempt to rely on their reflexivity, as Stevens (1996) described. However, it is exactly what the 'Existential' authenticity requires:

> *By taking responsibility for your actions and attitudes we acknowledge that they are a part of what we are. Choosing how to act, think and feel is thus an act of self-creation* (Stevens, 1996, p.198).

However, as discussed earlier, in late modernity, there is lack of guidance for moral principles (*'groundlessness'*). Indeed, the demand for 'existential' authenticity can become a real 'source of existential anxiety (Stevens, 1996, p. 198). Thus, it can be suggested that due to the potential existential anxiety caused by the 'existential authenticity', a lot of people may seek the 'eschatological' form of authenticity. The 'eschatological' form of authenticity has been described as:

> *Fall back on an internalized vocabulary of motives and world view that evokes traditional moral discourse and appeals to imagined futures* (cf. Bellah, et al, 1985; Zurcher, 1983; Weigert, 1988, p. 264)

Discussed earlier, individuals have to confront their existential issues and to exercise their power of choice/freedom. It is also argued that '*freedom to choose*' can entail responsibility and people often search for escape from the existential anxiety caused by demands of 'existential' authenticity. It has been suggested that escape can be found in ways in which individuals relate to society (Fromm, 1960; Stevens, 1996). Indeed, by relating to society, individuals can follow the guidelines ('*world view that evokes traditional moral discourse*' Weigert, 1988, p. 264) when they have to choose and also derive meanings and significance for their personal existences. This can be regarded as one manifestation of seeking 'eschatological' authenticity. Thus, by surrendering to the conventions of '*a political ideology or a religious belief system*' or by being dictated by '*fashion*' (Fromm, 1960; Stevens, 1996, p. 198-199), subsequently, individuals can feel certain kinds of 'authenticity' by following the traditions and conditions. Here it is argued that individuals have a relatively stable and consistent self. We can argue that this type of authenticity requires the third type of reflexivity suggested by Heelas (1996a) (See description, p. 103, in the thesis).

In addition, in the face of the paradox of freedom and the groundlessness of choices (Stevens, 1996), individuals can achieve some authenticity through creating meanings for themselves. Thus, it can be suggested that individuals may '*fall back on an internalized vocabulary of motives*' (Weigert, 1988, p. 264). This is another form of authenticity. For example, it is suggested that individuals can create meanings by the ways of: (1) 'hedonism'. *Meaning is found in pleasure*'; (2) 'Self-actualization' (*'fulfil one's potential' by freeing oneself and trusting in one's intuitive wisdom to develop towards a sense of 'fuller being')*; (3) Creativity (*bringing things into being and in relating to life in an imaginative and spontaneous way*'; (4) 'transcend the self' (*altruism- finding meaning in serving others and trying to leave the world a better* *place and dedication to a cause) (*Yalom, 1980; Stevens, 1996, p.206*).* It can be suggested these meanings can also aid the individuals to attain a sense of authenticity.

To sum up, we can suggest that the social environments in late modernity have resulted in the ambivalence of self concept and the crisis of existential meanings. However, due to the fundamental significance of the real self (authenticity), individuals can often seek strategies to cope with these ambivalences and subsequently attain some authenticity.

5.7 Relational Self

We are now going to discuss the interpersonal level of self representation. We will first explore the relational self.

5.7.1 Relational Self

The relational self has been described as the '*self in relation to significant others*' (Chen et al, 2006, p. 151). Significant others for individuals have been referred to people whom individuals know and feel close to and normally have a relationship with (Chen et al, 2006, p. 153). Chen et al (2006) suggest that the relational self consists of the 'attributes' and 'role-based conceptions' which can characterise him/her self when the individual is associated with a particular other person (Ogilvie and Ashmore, 1991, p. 290). Thus, the relational self constitutes the individuals' attributes and also the role-related perceptions. In addition, it has been suggested that the relational self can be manifested by self-with-other representations/expressions (Chen, et al, 2006). Indeed, these attributes and conceptions can be derived from individual experiences idiosyncratically as well as from cultural role demands ('*normative*') (Chen, et al, 2006, p. 154).

Moreover, Chen et al (2006) also emphasised that relational selves also contain the individuals' affections and emotions, goals and motives, and behaviours. Thus, relational selves in daily social life can also be manifested in the goals and motives people seek for. Indeed, it is suggested that goals can become part of relational selves: (1) when these goals are related to significant others (Chen, et al, 2006, p. 163) and (2) when these goals can be related to the personal tasks and life role tasks. It has been suggested that goals pursued by the individuals related to the relational selves may function as self-regulatory standards (Chen, et al, 2006, p. 163).

5.7.2 Family Identity and Consumption

Family identities have been referred to as collective identities, which can be reflected and constructed through the context of family life (Epp and Price, 2005). Family identity has been defined as:

> *The family's subjective sense of its own continuity over time, its present situation, and its character... It is the gestalt of qualities and attributes that make it a particular family and that differentiate it from other families' and the primary components of family identity: membership, temperamental and generational* (Bennett, et al, 1988, p. 212; cited by Epp and Price, 2005, p. 10)

Indeed, the family identity can be associated with attributes, characteristics and activities, which can be recognised by the family and give a sense of 'uniqueness' to the family members. In addition, family identities possess the features of stability (continuity), cross-situational consistency and also being dynamic and subject to change.

In marketing literature, research has demonstrated the association between family consumption and family's collective identities (e.g., Belk, 1988; Epp and Price, 2005; Moisio, et al, 2004). It has been argued that family identities are enacted through daily interactions and activities in '*family rituals*' (Epp and Price, 2005). In addition, through consumption activities people can use these symbols to enact and maintain family identity (Epp and Price, 2005, p. 10). Therefore, the family is important for the meanings attributed to consumption and for consumption activities themselves (e.g., Miller, 1998; Moore, et al, 2002; Price and Epp, 2005).

Another relevant concept introduced was 'family legacy'. Family legacy is defined as '*a living tradition, an aspect of the family's life world re-shaped over time in a family's particular situation and influenced by family, culture, and society*' (Plager, 1999, p. 52; cited by Arnould and Epp, 2006, p. 82). From this definition, we can see that the formation of family tradition is a fluid process in which the family adapt their family life to the changes occurring in their immediate situations and at the cultural and societal level.

In the context of consumption, Arnould and Epp (2006) defined family legacy as the '*living conditions that both the tacit and explicit consumer behaviours of families continuously amend and rework*' (p. 82). In addition, it has been suggested that family legacies include life themes, family myths and reflect shared values. Indeed, the dynamic nature has been stressed because these family legacies are also subject to *building, preserving, enacting, fluctuating and changing* (Arnould and Epp, 2006). It is also suggested that consumption is one way in which families enact and maintain their legacies (Arnould and Epp, 2006, p. 83). Indeed, Arnould and Epp (2006) suggested that, when individuals accept these legacies, the family identities can be maintained and preserved. This can be reflected in the family members' loyalty to products, brands or consumption activities in order to support the family legacy. In contrast, family members' rejection of these legacies can cause tension between individuals and family identity. This rejection can then be manifested in the family members' alternative consumption behaviours (Arnould and Epp, 2006, p. 83).

To sum up, we can argue that family identity can be regarded as one aspect of the relational self. At the individual level, this aspect of self is related to significant others in the family. The manifestation of the relational self in this context can be: (1) the individuals use of brands/products to communicate their personal attributes and the role-based conceptions in relation to significant others (2) individuals use of brands/products to show their acceptance of the family legacies. At the collective level, family identity is related to activities, attributes, and dispositions, which can represent the uniqueness of the family and thus, differentiate it from other families.

5.7.3 Role Identity and Role Conflicts

Individuals take social positions and social roles (McCall, 1977, p.276). Social role has been defined as affiliation with a specific social category with associated patterns of behaviour (Badad et al, 1983, p. 31). Thus each role contains the expectations for the appropriate behaviours required (Badad et al, 1983, p. 31). In addition, it has been suggested that people's actions, reactions and interactions all happen in a framework of various and varying roles. It is suggested that roles can be analysed at individual, interpersonal and group level (Badad et a, 1983). We are now going to discuss role concept at individual and interpersonal level. We are then going to discuss role conflicts.

Badad, et al (1983) suggested that at the individual level, people express their internalised beliefs, values and attitudes towards their specific roles through their role-related behaviours. Therefore, individuals are aware of how they are perceived and treated by others. In addition, they also know what they can expect from others. In the presenting self (5.3) and the social self (5.4) sections, we have illustrated how roles can become the basis for aspects of self and how self concept can be shaped by these roles. At the interpersonal level, people perceive and interact with others through the framework of social roles. Indeed, roles influence how individuals behave towards others (Badad, et al, 1983, p. 211). In the Relational Self section (5.1), we have discussed how roles can shape and affect individuals' behaviour and emotions in their interpersonal interactions.

It has also been argued that individuals have a hierarchy of role identities. Badad et al (1983) has described the scenario, in which two or more roles are salient and active at the same time, but the expectations for them are dissonant with each other. Thus, the existence of multiple role identities can potentially cause role conflicts (Badad, et al, 1983, p. 31). Indeed, Badad et al (1983) has delineated two types of role conflicts: 'intro-role' conflicts and 'inter-role' conflicts. The 'intro-role' conflicts can occur when '*elements within the same role contradict or exclude each other*' (p. 217). The 'interrole' conflicts can occur when '*the demands of different roles clash with each other and the effective performance of one role comes at the expense of another role in terms of commitment, conflicting interests or conflicting values*' (p. 217).

McCall (1977) has discussed the factors that can influence how individuals deal with these role conflicts. We have discussed various aspects of self concept and identity in previous sections. It is a shared notion that, as McCall (1977) suggested, in spite of various dimensions of self concept and plural identities, individuals sustain a certain degree of personal integrity and personal continuity across situations (e.g., James, 1890; Rosenberg, 1979). In addition, McCall (1977) further illustrated how two senses of identity (social and personal identity) can be related to the notion of self. It is suggested that social identity (mask and character) is formed in answering the question of 'who I am'. Thus, social identity ultimately formed the 'role-identity' (McCall, 1977). Personal identity is generated through the sustaining of personal integrity and continuity across role performances. Hence, personal identities are ultimately factor affecting the person's perceptions of the salience and importance of the hierarchy of role identities (p. 280). McCall (1977) further suggested that personal identity requires moral decisions, whereas role identity might enact self-awareness (self awareness of the anticipated reactions of various audiences). These two identities and their effects can influence how individuals deal with role conflicts.

5.8 Collective Self

The representations of self concept can also be analysed at group level (McCall, 1977; Badad et al, 1983). It can be suggest that self concept can be viewed as individuals' social roles and positions at the group level. At this level, self concept has been referred to as *'the aspect of self derived from social group memberships'* (Chen et al, 2006, p. 160).

5.8.1 Social Position and Stereotyping

The 'role' concept at the individual level and the interpersonal level has been illustrated in section 5.7.3. Now we are going to discuss social roles at the group level. At this level, roles are referred to as '*an identifiable group of people acting in predicting ways. Roles are also labels that people use to characterize themselves and others*' (Badad, et al, 1983, p. 211). Therefore, social roles can be identified through the patterns of predictable behaviours that are guided by an internalised set of expectations and obligations for social identities (Badad, et al, 1983, p. 211).

Social roles at group level can also be simplified by 'stereotypes'. Stereotypes can be defined as '*generalizations about social groups' characteristics that are attributed to all members of a given group, without regard to the variations that must exist between members of that group*' (Badad et al, 1983, p. 75). Essentially stereotypes are the prototypical characteristics of social groups. In addition stereotypes play three important functions: (1) 'value-expressive function'; (2) 'cognitive structure' and (3) 'ego-defensive function' (Katz, 1968), as Badad et al (1983) summarised. In addition, Badad, et al., (1983) have illustrated these three functions. The 'value expressive' function focuses on individuals' identification and affiliation with the group by expressing their beliefs and values. By affiliation with social groups, individuals can adapt social identities. Stereotyping can also provide a 'cognitive' structure for individuals, which can make the cognitive processing of self-relevant information easier. Indeed, this structure can provide guidance for the understanding of social environment and the rules associated with the roles and therefore enhance social interactions. The third function, 'ego defensive' function, focuses on the in-group and out-group boundary and this can provide the sense of the confirmation of the membership (Badad, et al, 1983).

5.8.2 Social Identity Theory

It has been suggested that the process of social identification can reflect the collective/group level of self concept (Hogg, 1996; Hogg and Abraham, 1988; Tajfel, 1978, 1982). Indeed, social identification has been referred to as a psychological connection with some other person or group (Reed II, 2002, p. 137). Indeed, the identification can entail emotional significance of the group to the individual (Turner and Onorato, 1999). In addition, social identification has also been described as individuals' identification with social categories in terms of the predictable shared behaviours and expectations for the social category (Reed II, 2002). The self concept associated with social categories can be termed as social identity. 'Social identity' has been conceptualized as:

> *Aspect of a person's self-concept based on their group memberships; it was a person's definition of self in terms of some social group membership with the associated value connotations and emotional significance (Turner and Onorato,*

1999, p. 18).

Thus, it can be suggested that through social identification, self concept can also be extended to interpersonal and intra-group level. It has been suggested that there are two mechanisms of formation of social identity: (1) social comparison and (2) self-categorisation. In terms of social comparison, Festinger (1954) has argued that people evaluate themselves (opinions and abilities) by comparing themselves with others. However, it has been pointed out that Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory tends to be restricted to the comparison with similar others. Therefore, it is suggested that up to the 1980s, virtually all research in the social comparison tradition in social psychology focused on the intra-group comparisons (See Suls and Wheeler, 2000; Guidmond, et al, 2006, p. 223).

Turner and Onorato (1999) suggested that social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel and Turner, 1979) has further developed Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory. Indeed, Turner and Onorato (1999) pointed out that social identity theory has emphasised that intergroup comparison also plays a fundamental role in forming social identity and regulating people's social behaviour. The underlying assumptions of social identity theory is that people evaluate themselves in terms of their in-group memberships and therefore people are in need of a positive social identity expressed through the distinctiveness of in-group (compared to the relevant dimensions of out-groups). Therefore, social comparisons between groups, in terms of the relevant dimensions for self evaluation, are important for the intergroup differentiation and positive self evaluation (or *'collective self esteem'*, as Crocker and Luhtanen (1990) suggested) (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 18). Indeed, it has been argued that intergroup comparison can affect group members' self concept and self esteem (Guidmond, et al, 2006, p. 223).

In addition, Turner and Onorato (1999) have stated that there are three aspects of social identity theory: (1) a need for positive social identity; (2) intergroup relationship; (3) 'interpersonal-intergroup continuum' (Tajfel, 1974; 1978). Therefore, social behaviour can be located along a continuum from the interpersonal to the intergroup. At the intergroup level, social interactions are determined by their membership in different groups (social identity). In contrast, at the interpersonal level, interactions are determined by personal relationships and their individual characteristics (personal identity) (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 19).

5.8.3 Self-Categorisation Theory

Social identity theory has been further developed into self-categorisation theory. The aim of the development of self-categorisation theory is to explain the distinction between interpersonal and intergroup behaviour. This has been achieved by emphasising the underlying distinction between personal and social identity (Turner, 1982; Turner and Onorato, 1999).

Self-categorisation has been described as a process which involves the following components: (1) 'self categorisation'; (2) 'self-stereotyping' and (3) the 'depersonalization of self-perception' (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 20). First, self-categorization has been described as '*the cognitive grouping of the self as identical to some class of stimuli in contrast to some other class of stimuli*'. Thus self-categorization is the classification process of self in terms of the in-group and also the out-group. Indeed, it has been argued that '*self categorization can exist at different levels of abstraction*' (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 21). Indeed, it has been suggested that the level of abstraction of self categorisation depends on the reference frame for self concept (personal identity or social identity) individuals adopted (Guidmond et al, 2006, p. 223). Hogg and McGarty (1990) have also suggested three levels of categorisation when people grouping themselves with reference to others: '*(1) the super-ordinate level of humanity (human identity); (2) intermediate group-out-group (social identity); (3) subordinate level to search for uniqueness from other in-group members (personal identity)*' (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 13). Next we are going to describe the personal and group level of self –categorisation.

When people compare themselves with other in-group members, they are classifying themselves at the level of personal identity. In this process, individuals define themselves '*as a unique person in terms of their individual differences from other (in-group) persons*' (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 22). In this sense, personal identity can be described as 'personalised'. In contrast, when people compare themselves with out-group members, they are labelling themselves at the level of social identity. In this process, the individuals define themselves as 'self-stereotyping' in terms of the characteristics that define the in-group as opposed to the out-group members (Guidmond et al, 2006, p. 223-224). Indeed, it is suggested that when people define themselves in terms of shared social category, there is an emphasis on the intra-group similarities and inter-group differences on the relevant dimensions. This can lead to '*enhanced perceptual identity between self and intra-group members and an enhanced perceptual contrast between in-group and out-group members*' (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 21). When social identity is more salient, people perceive themselves as '*similar, prototypical representatives of their in-group category*' (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 21). In this sense, individuals' group identity can be described as 'depersonalised'. This has been described as the '*depersonalization of the self- a cognitive redefinition of the self – from unique attributes and individual differences to shared social category members and associated stereotypes*' (Turner, 1984, p. 528; cited by Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 21).

Turner and Onorato (1999) has also pointed out that self-categorisation theory has indicated the variation in terms of the salience of any given level of classification. The self categorization process also indicates that there is interplay between the relative accessibility of a particular social category and the fit between the category specifications and the stimulus ready to be represented. In other words, for individuals, in certain contexts, there is a match/mismatch between the activated category and the reality. In addition, it has been suggested that the relative accessibility of the social category can be determined by: '*a person's past experiences; present expectations; current motives; values; goals; and needs*' (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 22). Turner and Onorato also point out that one important factor affecting the salience of certain social categories in specific situations is '*the extent of their identification with the group, the degree to which it is central, valued and ego evolving*' (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 22).

According to Hogg and McGarty (1990), self categorization can generate group/social attraction for the following reasons: '*(1) increased stereotypical similarities between intra-group members can lead to in-group members liking one another; (2) the favourable in-group prototypes can enhance the likability of in-group members; and (3) 'depersonalization' can lead to a sense of being 'interchangeable' between the in-group members*' (Hogg and McGarty, 1990, p. 15). In addition, it has been summarised that the primary motives for social identity include: self-esteem; self-evaluation; knowing oneself and knowing the environment. The related secondary drives for self-categorization include: (1) the needs for stimulation, affiliation and approval; (2) the need for self-expression through experiences; (3) the need for cognitive self-consistency; and (4) Self esteem. It has been suggested that these motivations can simply be achieved through the successful achievements of group-based consistency, control and power (Hogg and Abraham, 1990, p. 31-45).

5.9 Self Regulation

The review has shown that there are a variety of aspects of self concept across different theories. In order to reveal the interrelationships among these aspects of self concept, Higgins (1987) has proposed two dimensions underlying these self representations such as (1) *domains of the self* and (2) *standpoints of the self.*

Higgins (1987) suggested that there are three basic domains of the self: (1) the 'actual self' (2) the 'ideal self' and (3) the 'ought self'. Carver et al (1999) extended these domains of the self to include the 'feared self' (Carver et al, 1999, p.785). The 'actual self' can be referred to as attributes the individual, or what others believe the individual, actually possesses. The '*ideal*' self' can be described as attributes the individual ideally hopes, and others would like the individual to have. The 'ideal' self can also be referred to as others' hopes, aspirations, or wishes for the individual. The '*ought*' self has been referred to as attributes that the person or another believes the person should or ought to possess. Indeed, the 'ought self' includes a representation of the person's own or others' sense of his/her duty, obligations, or responsibilities (Higgins, 1987, p. 320-321). Finally, the 'feared' self refers to attributes that the person or others fear the person to possess (Carver et al, 1999).

The standpoints of self have been defined as '*a point of view from which individuals can be judged and the standpoints can reflect a set of attitudes or values*' (Higgins, 1987, p. 321). For Higgins (1987), there are two basic standpoints on the self: (1) the individuals' *own* personal standpoint and (2) the standpoint of some *significant others* (e.g., mother, father, sibling, spouse, or closest friend).

In terms of individuals' own personal standpoint, there are two resources: significant others and generalised others. Indeed, a person's personal standpoint of self concept can been referred to as the person's '*self-state representations*' for each of the significant others (Higgins, 1987, p. 321). The own standpoint of self reflects James's social self concept and Cooley's looking class self concept. Indeed, the own standpoint is actually internalised viewpoints of significant others. The own standpoints are relatively stable. The person's own standpoint of self concept can also be based on the viewpoint of 'generalised others' rather than of 'particular others' (Higgins, 1987, p. 321). This standpoint of self concept reflects Mead's symbolic interactionist approach to self concept. According to the symbolic interactionism, individuals eventually take the role of the generalised others. Individuals respond to themselves and can develop self attitude. This self attitude is consistent with the attitudes/opinions expressed by others. Indeed, Higgins (1987) suggests that one source of other standpoints on self is from the inner audience. These standpoints on self have been referred to as the person's internalised others' values, goals and standards for the self (p. 189). Thus it has been suggested that reference groups can also have impact on individual's self–judgment.

Indeed, Moretti and Higgins (1999) suggest that one source of other standpoints on self is the '*values, goals and standards' that significant others in one's immediate external environment hold for the individual'* (p. 189). Indeed, Moretti and Higgins (1999) notion reflects the other standpoints for individuals' self concept, i.e. the phenomenal self as discussed previously. Indeed, these other standpoints are fluid and derived from the environments.

Higgins (1987) suggested that due to the distinction between individuals' own and others' standpoint on the 'self-state representations', individuals can relate different emotional and motivational conditions to different self-state conditions (Higgins, 1987, p. 321). Higgins (1987) suggested that there are six basic types of self-state representations: '*(1) actual/own; (2) actual/other; (3) ideal/own; (4) ideal/other; (5) ought/own; and 6) ought/other*' (p. 321). Indeed, he suggested that the first two are associated with the person's self concept and the remaining four self-state representations are termed as 'self-guides'. The self guides are referred to as '*self-directive standards or acquired guides for being/self*' (p. 321). Higgins (1987) pointed out that different people have different motivations for self guides. For example, some people are more concerned about the 'ought-self-guides', whereas some may possess only 'ideal self-guides'. In addition, Higgins (1987) further described those incongruities between the self-state representations as 'self-discrepancies'. It is argued that people are motivated to have self-concepts that match their personally relevant self-guides (p. 321).

5.10 Self Monitoring and Self-Discrepancy Theory

As discussed in 5.9, one 'other standpoint' on self concept focuses on the point of view of self concept from significant others. It is suggested that these standpoints can be derived from the immediate social environments. In addition, the effect of 'standpoints of self' people's self concept depends on its salience, importance and accessibility. These effects can also be influenced by the person's self-monitoring and self-awareness (Moretti and Higgins, 1999).

Gonnerman et al (2000) has summarized the idea of 'self monitoring'. According to Gonnerman et al (2000), self-monitoring has been referred to as the extent that the situational sources of information can influence a person's cognitions and behaviour. In other words, self monitoring reflects how much a person will monitor and regulate their cognition and behaviour by following the situational and external influences from the immediate social environments. It has been suggested that individuals with low self-monitoring follow their internal cues. These internal cues can include their internalised values, goals and standards either from 'other standpoint' on self or their 'own standpoint' on self. In contrast, individuals with high self monitoring are concerned more with 'other standpoint' on self from the immediate social environment. These individuals attempt to monitor their behaviour to fit into the given situations (Snyder, 1979, 1987).

Gonnerman et al (2000) has also explored the individual differences in terms of the effect of self-discrepancies on individual's affective states. Their research showed that people with low self-monitoring can experience depression and anxiety only by self-discrepancies from their 'own standpoint' on self. In contrast, self-discrepancies from 'other standpoint' on self can produce stronger depression and anxiety for people with high self-monitoring.

5.11 Other Motives for Identity Construction

It is widely accepted that people are motivated to protect and enhance their self-esteem. Vignoles et al (2006) developed an integrated theory for self concept motivations which are relevant to individual, relational and group levels of self-representations. Their research has shown that at least five more motives beyond self-esteem are relevant to identity structure and construction. These motives are: *self-esteem; continuity; distinctiveness; belonging; efficacy and meaning.*

The 'self esteem' motive has been described as, '*the motivation to maintain and enhance a positive conception of oneself" (Gecas, 1982, p. 20)*' (Cited by Vignoles et al, 2006, p. 309). It is suggested that this motive can be increased through self enhancement, maintained through self verification. In addition, the self esteem motive can also be manifested in inter-group relations (Vignoles et al, 2006, p.310). The 'continuity motive' refers to individual '*motivation to maintain a sense of continuity across time and situation within self and identity*' (p.310). Vignoles et al (2006) suggested that from extant research, people pay more attention to information consistent with people's self concept. People also try to find and create social situations, which can provide self-verifying information. Therefore, the self continuity motive can be applied to both personal and group identities (p.310). 'Distinctiveness' essentially means that people attempt to gains some sense of differentiation from others. This can be manifested at both the interpersonal and intergroup differentiation. Indeed, this has been implicated in many outcomes such as 'person and group perceptions, consumer preferences, self-stereotyping, group identification, interpersonal attraction and various forms of intergroup differentiation' (Reviewed by Vignoles et al, 2000) (p. 310). 'Belonging motives' refers to '*the need to maintain or enhance feelings of closeness to or acceptance by other people, whether in dyadic relationships or within in-groups' and this is regarded as a fundamental human motivation*' (p. 310). The 'efficacy motive' refers to a sense of '*competence and control' and it is also theorized as a fundamental human motive and a defining nature of identity*' (p. 310). Finally, the 'meaning motive' refers to '*the need to find some significance or purpose in one's own experience*' (p. 311).

5.12 Self Construal

Self-construal here refers to both the construction and the psychological meanings of self-concept for people (Hardin, et al, 2004). Markus and Kitayama (1991) identified two primary types of self-construal: 'the independent' and 'the interdependent' in their cross-cultural analysis. In addition, it has been suggested that in the West, people might also develop 'relational interdependent self-construal' (Cross et al, 2003).

5.12.1 Independent, Interdependent and Relational Self Construal

Cross et al (2003) suggest that the underlying assumption of Western social psychology has been an individualistic definition of the person. For the individual, there is *a ''core', 'real self' and 'unchanging and constant across situations'* (Heine, 2001, p. 886). Therefore, people construct and maintain the self through the expression of stable traits, abilities and personal characteristics. It has been suggested that in the West, the cultural model of self definition results in the development of an independent self construal (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Cross et al, 2003).

In contrast to the Western idea of self, self in the East has generally been portrayed as a relational phenomenon. Thus, relationships and roles are more important than individual characteristics and internal attributes, attitudes and beliefs for the individuals' self definition (Heine, 2001, p. 886). In addition, this cultural model of self indicates that the maintenance of self becomes a '*matter of fitting into the norms, rules, and expectations of particular roles and situations*' (Cross et al, 2003, p. 934). Indeed, this type of self construal also reflects the view of *'a relationship as integral parts of the person's very being*' (Guimond, et al, 2006, p. 222). It has also been suggested that the role of relationships with in-group members also plays a significant role in the construction of the interdependent self (Heine, 2001, p. 885).

Cross et al (2003) described that in the West, researchers have started to explore self-construal when self concept is diverged from the independent and individualistic cultural model. Cross et al (2003) has identified that women in Western contexts are more likely to develop a kind of self-construal. This type of self construal is termed as 'relational-interdependent self-construal' (Cross, et al, 2000). It been shortened to '*relational self construal'*. Indeed it has been argued that people with relational self construal are more concerned with the development, maintenance and enhancement of close relationships. Therefore, close relationships are essential components in their self concept and these relationships are also essential for their self expression and self enhancement (Cross et al, 2003, p. 935). In addition, Cross et al (2003) defined the relational self-construal as '*a Western version of the interdependent self-construal, or as intermediate between the individualistic orientation of the independent self-construal and the group-oriented interdependent self construal*' (p. 935). However, there are differences in terms of the type of relationships for the formation of interdependent self construal between the West and the East. As Cross et al (2003) described, Triandis' (1989) research has shown that that in USA, dyadic relationships tend to be the focus of interdependence self-construal, in contrast to the group memberships and collectives in East Asian cultures.

5.12.2 Gender Differences and Self Construal

It has been suggested that there are stereotypical differences between men and women in terms of traits, role orientations, self orientations and self construal. For example, men have been portrayed as being competitive and assertive. In contrast, it has been argued that women are associated with being emotional and concerned with others (Deaux, 1985; Guimond et al, 2006, p. 221). In addition, these characteristics of gender differences have also manifested in roles or general orientations (Guimond, et al, 2006, p. 221). Moreover, differences between genders have also been proposed in terms of self orientation. It has been suggested that self as 'agency' (independent and autonomous aspect of self) is the typical male orientation. In contrast, self as 'communion' (relational aspects of the self) reflects the typical female orientation (Guimond, 2006, p. 221). Indeed, many scholars have also argued that there are gender differences in terms of self construal (Guimond et al, 2006 provides a good summary). For example, Cross and Madson (1997) have suggested that extensive evidence can support the existence of gender differences in terms of self-construal. Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) have also shown that social attributes are more important aspects of self-definition for women than men. Josephs et al (1992) conducted an experiment and showed that men's sense of self-worth is closely linked to autonomy and sense of personal accomplishment, whereas women emphasise connectedness and sensitivity to others (Guidmond, et al, 2006, p. 222). Guidmond et al (2006) suggested that more recent studies support the hypothesis that women display higher relational interdependence and men show higher independence in their self construal (p. 222).

Chapter Summary:

This chapter has reviewed self concept theories in social psychology. The review is organised around the level of representations (individual, relational and collective) of self concept. In addition to the components, structure and the cognition of self concept, the emotional, motivational and behavioural aspects of self concept are also illustrated. The aim of this chapter has been to provide the theoretical perspectives on self concept. These will be applied in the data analysis chapter to explain how consumers - in their daily life and consumption process - cope with their roles, construct and maintain their self concept in social environment and social life.

CHAPTER 6

RELATIONSHIP THEORIES

This chapter reviews interpersonal relationship theories. Indeed, it has been suggested that there are three main theoretical orientations in human relationship research: (1) Evolutionary; (2) Attachment and (3) Interdependence. Evolutionary and attachment approaches have focused more on the effects of individual personal traits or dispositions (either the '*inherited biological make-up*' or '*the genetic inheritance and childhood experience*') on relationships. In contrast, interdependence orientation for relationships emphasises interdependence and interactions in relationships (Reis and Rusbult, 2004, p. 6). Indeed, the main focus of the research is not to investigate how personal traits can affect relationships but to explore consumer/store relationships per se. Therefore, the review will mainly concentrate on theories located in the interdependence perspective. Hence, the focus will be on the characteristics and developmental stages of relationships. These theories will enable us to interpret the themes that emerged in the data. Indeed, these theories can aid us to gain more insights into the bonds/connections between consumers and their stores. This will correspond with the second stage of the conceptual framework described in Chapter 1.

6.1 Definitions and Characteristics of Relationships

Relationships have been defined as 'a sequence of interactions' and 'interdependence' (e.g. Hinde, 1979, p.15). Kelley et al (1983) has also formulated a widely accepted definition for relationships that emphasises strong, frequent, and diverse effects between the relationship partners over a period of time (Berscheid, et al, 1989, p. 69).

These definitions indicate that the characteristics of relationships include interaction (behavioural and emotional aspects), interdependence, and temporality.

Relationships have also been defined from a procedural approach (Duck and Sants, 1983). This definition has regarded interpersonal relationships as psychological units, which can be developed through recognitions of the meanings and can be represented through language. Indeed, this approach has emphasised the importance of meanings for the nature and development of relationships and the role of language for the understanding of personal relationships. In addition, it has been argued that language and the content of information used by participants to describe the relationship can reveal the meanings and emotional status, as well as developmental stages of relationships (Burnett, 1987). Therefore, it can be suggested that relationships can be studied through investigating the participants' account of their relationships.

6.1.1 Interactions

It has been suggested that interactions are a key component of relationships. Interactions have been defined as successive actions with related goals, centre and meanings (Hinde, 1979). It is suggested that interactions can be described in terms of behavioural aspects (Hinde, 1979). Hinde (1979) described the behavioural aspects of interactions in respect of *'content'; 'quality'; 'frequency' and 'patterns'* (p. 15). The content of interactions has also been referred to what people actually do or are expected to do in a relationship. It has been suggested that content of interactions can differentiate relationships between 'uniplex' (involving one type of interaction) and 'multiplex' (involving many types of interactions). Moreover, the quality of interactions can be measured by intensity, content, communications and meanings attached to it in the context in which it occurs. Relative frequency and patterns are also the features of interactions (Hinde, 1979). Indeed, these behavioural aspects of interactions can be used to describe the characteristics of relationships. In addition, one important feature of interactions is called 'interdependence'. It is argued that in interactions, the behaviour of one person is to some extent co-ordinated with and influenced by the behaviour of other people in the relationship (Hinde, 1979).

6.1.2 Interdependence

It is suggested that interdependence can characterise interactions (Hinde, 1979). Kelley (1986) has delineated two inter-related levels of interdependence: (1) the given level and (2) the dispositional level. The given level of interdependence refers to people's dependence on more direct and concrete outcomes through specific behaviour in interactions. Relationship partners therefore derive satisfaction from the '*compliments, gifts, information, services and companionship*' others provided (Kelley, 1986). The dispositional level interdependence focuses on symbolic outcomes derived from interpersonal attitudes and shared traits. Thus, relationship partners become interdependent on '*love, concern, fairness, assertiveness and other dispositions the partners display*' (Kelley, 1986). In addition, it is suggested that the support gained from relationships for people's self and personality can also be linked to dispositional level of interdependence (Duck, 1977). Indeed, in relationships, individuals can display aspects of self and personality and these aspects of self and personality can be supported by relationships in which he/she gets involved. Moreover, these relationships can in turn influence participants' self and personality (Duck, 1977). Argyle (1969) has also suggested that two participants in a relationship generally accept self-image represented by the other. However, participants may only reveal some aspects of self concept in a relationship. Therefore, people reveal a somewhat different self in each relationship in which they are involved and the self revealed depends in part on the other member of the dyad (e.g. McCall and Simmons, 1966). In addition, due to the importance of self-consistency for people, a considerable degree of longitudinal and cross-situational consistency of self concept exists across the relationships the person engaged in (Block, 1977).

It is suggested that the sources exchanged in a relationship can represent and determine the type of interdependence. Broadly, six categories of resources are exchanged in relationships: *(1) love; (2) status; (3) information; (4) services; (5) goods and (6) money* (Foa and Foa, 1980). In addition, these categories can be located on two dimensions: (1) *'particularism/universalism'* (depending on who provides them) and (2) *'symbolic/tangible'* (Foa and Foa, 1980).

Kelley (1986) further pointed out the interconnections between these two levels of interdependence. The dispositional level can be derived and developed from the given level. However, the given level can also be determined by the dispositional level interdependence (Kelley, 1986, p.11). In addition, it has been suggested that interdependence possesses the following properties: *'frequency and strength'; 'symmetry/asymmetry' and 'voluntary/imposed'* (Kelley, et al, 1983; Fournier, 1994). Frequency refers to the rate of interactions between relationship partners in a given period of time. Strength is more concerned with the importance of the interaction, the effect and the degree of dependability on the other's action. Symmetry of relationship is concerned with the equality of people's investment and rewards in the relationship. Symmetry relationship also implies equality, power and dependency. Indeed, these features can be located on a continuum. Voluntary interdependence can signify the commitment of two parties to each other in the absence of external pressure and constraints. In contrast, external forces and restrictions can bring about imposed interdependence, as Fournier (1994) summarised.

6.1.3 Temporality

It has been argued that for a relationship to exist, interactions between partners must occur over an extended period of time. Moreover, current interactions can influence future interactions in the relationship (Hinde, 1979). These properties of relationships have been referred to 'temporality' of relationship. Hinde (1979) has emphasised that the temporality of relationships entails *the continuity, content and patterns of relationships*. By elaborating Hinde's (1979) notion, Fournier (1994) has suggested that a valid relationship is one that has a shared history and an anticipative future. Thus, the basis for future association is in large grounded in relationship expectations and obligations that regulate performance and evaluations of behaviours in the relationship (Fournier, 1994, p. 30). Berscheid (2004) has also suggested that the regularity/rule/norm of a relationship is revealed and formed over time and therefore relationships are '*inherently temporal rather than static*' (p. 27). We can suggest that the 'temporal' property of relationships also indicates the dynamic and evolutionary nature of relationships.

6.1.4 Affective and Cognitive Aspects of Interaction (Behaviour)

Hinde (1979) has suggested that in order to understand the effect of interactions on relationships, we should focus on the relationship partners' actual behaviours, their perceptions of these behaviours and also the affective aspects of these behaviours (Hinde, 1979, p.15). In addition to concrete behaviours, Hinde (1979) has emphasised that the partners' perception of each other (especially their self image and personality) can affect the relationships. Additionally, Hinde (1979) also stressed the importance of norms and rules for the governance of behaviours. Norms are basically referred to as shared expectations. Indeed, the individual knows how the other expects him/her to behave and he/she knows what to expect from others in a given situation (Tajfel, 1972, p.101; Hinde, 1979, p.32). Moreover, Hinde (1979) suggested that in addition to the effect of norms on partners' behaviours in the relationship, emotions and values could also be affected by these relationship norms. When these norms are more consciously recognised, accepted and shared by the dyad of the relationship, they can become rules. Subsequently we can then say that behaviours can become rule-governed (p.32). In addition to the rule-governed feature of behaviours, it is suggested that behaviour is also goal directed. Therefore, goals have been regarded as an element of relationships. Goals in a relationship refer to the benefits relationship partners get in the relationship and the interdependence on each other in this respect (Argyle, 1986, p.28). Fournier (1994) summarised the primary goals sought through relationships as:

> *A bond may be instrumental or socio-emotional in nature. Socio-emotional ... include identity-related functions (i.e. self-evaluation, self-definition, and self-validation) as well as the rewards of stimulations, enjoyable associations, security, stability, companionship, guidance, and assistance or social support. Instrumental provisions are more functional, tied to the attainment of objective and specific short-term goals* (p. 31)

6.1.5 Relationship as Affective Tie: Attachment

It is argued that relationships are more than the '*sum of behavioural interactions*' (Hinde, 1979, p. 36). Indeed, close relationships have been described as '*attachment and affective ties*' (Hinde, 1979). Moreover, attachment has been viewed as an '*organizing construct*' that can control the individual's behaviour towards seeking proximity/closeness with attachment figures (Ainsworth, 1969; 1972; Hinde, 1979). It has also been suggested that even though individuals' attachment behaviour might vary due to environmental and other factors. Nevertheless, attachment can often be stable (Hinde, 1979). In addition, it has been suggested that it is important to take into account the behavioural and affective components (the goals and feelings) in terms of the operation of attachment (Scroufe and Walters, 1977). Indeed, Fournier (1994) has also emphasised the affective nature of relationships. For Fournier (1994), the ties between relationship partners can be substantively grounded (task, obligation or investment-related) or emotionally based. On the positive emotion side, affective bonds range from simple forms of liking to a more passionate, intense and involving experience. These affective bonds are usually referred to as love. Therefore many love models have been developed. These models share the same assumptions that love is essentially multi-faceted in nature and that there is a range of possible love forms and types (See Table 6.2).

6.1.6 Closeness

It can be suggested that closeness is another feature characterising relationships. The factors which can signify the closeness of relationship include: the type of relationships; the meanings of 'close' for participants; the emotional tones and interdependence (Clarke and Reis, 1988); trust (Berscheid, et al, 1989) and the form of reciprocity (Argyle, 1969).

It has been suggested that some relationship types (such as close friends and lovers) signify high levels of closeness. People view both close friends and lovers as enjoying, accepting, respecting, helping and confiding in each other. Indeed, relationship researchers have divided the dimensions into several sub-categories for the purpose of analysis, such as the degree of intimacy and familial labels (Bradbury and Fincham, 1989, p. 166). Indeed, close friendship possesses features of the intimacy of romantic love and familial love, but usually lacks the passion of the former and the involuntary aspects of the latter (Bradbury and Fincham, 1989, p. 166).

The meanings associated with the word 'close' can be used to assess the degree of closeness of the relationship. According to Clark and Reis (1988), the meanings of the word 'close' can convey various meanings such as 'love, caring, intimacy, trust, commitment and so forth'. In addition, the emotional tones associated with relationships can also indicate the closeness of relationships (Clark and Reis, 1988, p. 68; Duck and Sants, 1983).

It has also been argued that the type of interdependence can also indicate the degree of closeness of the relationship. For example, it is suggested that close relationships can be characterised by high interdependence with regard to four interconnected features: (1) frequent; (2) strong impact; (3) diverse kinds of activities and (4) the long-duration of the impact (Clark and Reis, 1988, p. 69). Indeed, it is suggested that trust can reflect the closeness of the relationship (Berscheid, et al, 1989). Trust is related to people's expectations on their partner's attitude towards the relationship, the perceived quality and intensity of the affective bond (Holmes and Rempel, 1986, p. 188).

The form of reciprocity can also signify closeness of the relationship. For example, Argyle (1969) has suggested that the closer the relationship, the more altruistic the form of reciprocity observed (Argyle, 1969, p. 173). The altruistic reciprocity means that '*A gives to B without thought of future rewards from B*' (Argyle, 1969, p. 173).

Another notion of closeness is the '*inclusion of the other in the self*' (Aron et al, 1992). This notion suggests that in a close relationship, individuals see aspects of the partner as part of the individual's own, including resources, perspectives and characteristics (Aron et al, 1992).

To sum up, we have discussed the characteristics/nature of relationships. It can be suggested that these characteristics are the fundamental components of any relationship. These characteristics also manifest at the developmental stages of relationships. Therefore, it can be suggested that these characteristics can differentiate different types of relationships. In addition, they can indicate the developmental stages of the same relationship.

6.2 Developmental Stages of Relationships

Many relationship theorists have explored the developmental stages of interpersonal relationships. We have described a few models for human relationship development in order to understand the common themes in terms of the stages of relationship development.

Table 6.1 Developmental Stages of Relationships

Author and study	**Stages of relationships**
Thibaut and Kelley (1959)	Four stages of marital relationships: 'Sampling'- individual selects those with whom he/she wishes to interact; 'Bargaining'- acquaintance is formed and the individual assesses the probability of future profit; 'Commitment'- public or private ; 'Institutionalisation' – marriage or some other form appropriate.
Levinger and Snoek (1972)	Three levels of relatedness: 'Unilateral awareness': perceptions of the other's attributes and evaluated in terms of his own values or goals; 'Surface contact': the transition depends on the perceived similarity, assumed orientation and the estimate of costs; 'Mutuality': sharing knowledge, assuming responsibility for future goals and norms; emphasis on interpersonal discovery, mutual investment, self disclosure increases, accommodating to other's needs and values.
Murstein (1977)	Courtship and marriage in USA, three stages: 'Stimulus stage': initial judgements (perceptions and judgments about the other); 'Value comparison': dealing information concerning the relationship partners' background, attitudes, values, interests etc. 'Role Comparison': role compatibility (assessed by comparing expectations with perception of the degree to which these expectations are fulfilled over a wide range of behaviour).
Knapp	Five stages:

(1984)	Initiating, experimenting, intensifying, integrating and bonding.

From these models, it can be suggested that divisions of the stages of relationships are different in number. Indeed, these divisions are derived from different types of relationships However, Reis and Rusbult (2004) suggested that the developmental stages of relationships can be roughly divided into four stages: (1) attraction and initiating relationship; (2) developing relationships; (3) sustaining on-going relationships and 4) deteriorating relationships. Therefore we are going to illustrate the development of relationships by employing this four-stage general division without considering the specific type of relationships.

6.2.1 Attraction and Initiation of Relationships

At this stage, the main concerns about relationships are the initial encounters between people. People select those with whom he/she wishes to interact on the basis of first impressions and information about the others. This stage has been termed the 'sampling stage' (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959) and the 'stimulus stage' (Murstein, 1997). Indeed, at this stage, people are keen to attract and connect with each other (Reis and Rustult, 2004, p. 8).

6.2.1.a First Impressions

First impression can be referred to as individuals' initial judgment and perception of others. First impression is the factor affecting initiation and further interactions of a relationship. Indeed, cognitive social psychology has been investigating this process in terms of (1) how people gain knowledge about others' behaviour and events in social interactions and (2) how people use the knowledge to guide their further actions (Snyder et al, 2004, p. 100). 'Social cognition' is the term used to describe this process (Operario and Fiske, 1999). It has been suggested that in social psychology, there are three approaches to explain the process of social cognition: (1) *'naïve scientist'*; (2) *'cognitive miser'* and (3) *'motivated technician'* (Operario and Fiske, 1999).

The 'naïve scientists' notion regards people as 'rational beings' who process information in a logical and systematic way (Operario and Fiske, 1999). It has been suggested that research on social cognition from this approach is primarily guided by attribution theories (e.g., Heider, 1958; Jones and Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967). Accordingly, people carefully process the information in an inferential process in order to reveal the causes of others and their own behaviour, to form judgments, make intentions and take actions (Operario and Fiske, 1999, p. 65).

It has been suggested that in social interactions, 'cognitive misers' notion has described that people form impressions of others and develop social stereotypes and then use these stereotypes to process future information and to guide their future social interactions. This approach to social cognition is based on the assumption that human beings have a limited capacity for information processing and they have to process the information in an energy-saving manner (Operario and Fiske, 1999). The 'cognitive miser' approach has also emphasised that stereotypes, selective memory and category-based expectancies are inherent to social judgment. Indeed, this approach also stresses human beings' efficient modes of thinking. However, Operario and Fiske (1999) has pointed out this approach has often portrayed humans as '*automatons driven by their cognitive structure' rather than 'versatile and resourceful thinkers*' (p. 66). Moreover, this approach has overlooked '*the role of motivations, goals, and affect*' in social cognition (Operario and Fiske, 1999, p. 66).

The third approach, developed by Operario and Fiske (1999), is called the 'motivated tactician'. This approach has regarded humans as a '*fully engaged thinker who has* *multiple cognitive strategies available and can choose among them based on goals, motives and needs*' (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, p. 13; Cited by Operario and Fiske, 1999, p. 67). The mechanism underlying this approach is the 'dual process' model in social cognition. It has also been suggested that there are two sub-systems, which guide people's cognitions and behaviours. The first system is featured as 'automatic, spontaneous and effortless' and the second system is described as 'more controlled, deliberative and effortful'. Indeed, it has been suggested that people tend to rely more on the first sub-system because it demands fewer cognitive resources. However, when people are motivated to think more thoroughly, they tend to rely on the second subsystem that demands increased cognitive resources. Hence this dual process reconciles the tension between the naïve scientist and cognitive miser approaches. The dual system has also emphasised the role of people's motivations and goals. Indeed, it has been argued that people's motivations and goals can direct their thoughts towards either the superficial or the more systematic effortful tendency (Fiske and Neuberg, 1990) (Operario and Fiske, 1999, p. 67).

It is suggested that four motives can apply to social cognition: *'belonging'; 'understanding'; 'controlling' and 'maintaining the self'* (Operario and Fiske, 1999, p. 68-72). Thus it can be suggested that goals and motivations can affect the kind of cognition process for individuals to process the information. Thus, these motives can affect which sub-system (approach) individuals use to cope with social cognition in different stages of relationship.

6.2.1.b Attraction

Attraction has been referred to as 'stated liking' (Duck, 1977, p. 8). It has been suggested that attraction is usually restricted to describing the initial responses, first reactions and short-term rather than longer lasting positivity to others (Duck, 1977, p.

8). In addition, interpersonal attraction is a multi-faceted activity that can be measured by three components of attitudes: '*cognitive*'; '*affective*' and '*behavioural*' (Duck, 1977, p. 9).

Some theorists have emphasised the cognitive nature of attraction. For example, Ajzen (1977) argued that attractiveness lies in the perceiver's positive beliefs about the other person. It is argued that affective experience is irrelevant unless it can result in positive beliefs (Ajzen, 1977). Therefore, it has been suggested that cognitive judgments (evaluation and liking) are more central than the direct measures of emotional arousal for understanding of interpersonal attraction (Ajzen, 1977, p. 52). From this perspective, it has been suggested that attraction is determined not by similarity, self-disclosure, or eye contact but rather by the beliefs that are formed on the basis of the information derived from these factors (Ajzen, 1977, p. 77).

Other theorists have emphasised the affective aspects of attractiveness. For example, Duck (1977) viewed attraction as more of a way to deal with one's own feelings, sentiments or emotions towards the other. Indeed, many studies have shown that affection is one factor attributing to attraction. For example, Folkes and Sears (1977) found that people tend to feel more attractive to some people who say and do positive things to them than to others who say and do negative things. Research has also shown that people tend to like others who like them, and tend to dislike others who dislike them (Backman and Secord, 1959). Moreover, Clore and Byrne (1974) suggested that attraction is an affective phenomenon. They have suggested that as long as the perceiver associates positive affective experience with the other person, attraction will occur (p. 35). Nevertheless, Clore (1977) has argued that in most experiments, the same events may elicit both positive affects and beliefs about the other person. Therefore, Clore (1977) has suggested that it is possible that attraction can be '*based on facts, beliefs, and inferences about the stimulus person... but affect is sometimes the critical element*' (p. 37).

It has been suggested that proximity and similarity are two key factors to enhance initial attraction (who are attracted to whom and why) (Hinde, 1979). Research has found that the probability of forming a friendship is partly influenced by the immediacy and availability of others in our lives (Festinger et al, 1950). It has been suggested that one mechanism of the effect of proximity can be that simple repeated exposure to another person tends to enhance our attraction to others (e.g., Zajonc, 1968). Indeed, it has been argued that all other things being equal, the simple act of interacting with another person causes us to become more strongly attracted to that person (e.g., Insko and Wilson, 1977; Hinde, 1979). 'Passive contact' such as a nod of the head or some brief greetings can also lead people to like one another (Festinger, et al, 1950) (For an example of good review see Moreland and Beach, 2004, p. 89). Moreover, a shared environment provides opportunities for social interaction, and if those interactions are rewarding, then the participants may learn to like one another. In addition, proximity allows individuals to exchange resources with less cost than is possible for the individual living far apart (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; cited by Hinde, 1979, p. 89) and increase the possibility of their being familiar with each other (Moreland and Beach, 2004).

It has been suggested that similarity can also enhance attraction. The positive relationship between similar attitudes and attraction to each other has been revealed. For example, Byrne (1977) has found that on average, a given increase in the proportion of similar attitudes yields a comparable percentage increase in attraction to another (Byrne, 1977; Cited by Hinde, 1979, p. 94). Theorists have also attempted to explore the mechanisms underlying the association between similarity and attraction.

For example, it has been suggested that similarity was a relevant variable in attraction only when it can lead to positive inferences about the other person's traits (Ajzen, 1974; Clore, 1977). Moreover, it has also been suggested that similarity can supply a basis for in-group affiliations (Hinde, 1979). It has also been argued that internalised social pressure makes similarity a desirable attribute because similarity can enhance the affiliation with the group. From the biological perspective, members of the same group tend to elicit affiliate response (Tinbergen, 1968; cited by Hinde, 1979, p. 91). In addition, it has been suggested that similarity in terms of self construct is likely to facilitate friendship formation. The similarity can enhance the communication and understanding but can provide support and external validation for the self concept (e.g., Duck, 1977; Aron et al, 1992).

6.2.1.c Affiliation

Affiliation refers to people searching for other people as company or a willingness to become involved in social situations (Duck, 1977). It has been suggested that affiliation can reflect the motivation for people to get involved in and strengthen social relations (Moreland and Beach, 2004). Indeed, it has been suggested that people affiliate with others for a variety of reasons: searching for comfort; gaining a more accurate understanding of themselves; making people feel better about them and improving themselves (Sedikides and Strube, 1997). Moreover, affinity has been a construct that is used to describe the force enhancing closeness among people in social relations. It has been suggested that affinity, as a complex blend of familiarity, attraction and similarity, can strengthen social relations by fostering a sense of closeness among people (Moreland and Beach, 2004).

It has also been suggested that familiarity, attraction and similarity are strongly related to each other. Indeed, these three factors function together to produce a sense of 'affinity' that brings people together psychologically (Hinde, 1979; Moreland and Beach, 2004). Moreland and Beach (2004) have also compared the effects of these three factors with Heider's (1958) views on the 'balance' notion for social relations. It is argued that all these effects are consistent with Heider's (1958) views on the role of balance in social relations. In Heider's terms, familiarity and similarity represent positive unit relation, whereas attraction is associated with positive sentiment relation. Sentiment and unit relations must be congruent or balanced; otherwise, we will feel (and appear) foolish. When a 'unit relation' arises between ourselves and another person, we must develop a positive 'sentiment relation' with that person in order to remain balanced. Once that sentiment relation is established, balance dictates that any other unit relations (if they are still unspecified or distorted) must be made positive too (Moreland and Beach, 2004, p. 91).

6.2.2 Developing Relationships

The indicators of the growth and maintenance of relationships can reflect the development of a smooth pattern of interactions (Hinde, 1979, P.356). There are four aspects to indicate the smooth pattern of interactions, as Hinde (1979) suggested. Firstly, the two partners can reach agreement on the definition of the situation and its rules. They accept the self-image presented by each other. On the basis of this, the role-relationship between the two partners is clear. Secondly, the relationship starts to have its unique quality. Then relationship partners come to see each other and the connection between them in a special way. Indeed, the other can possibly be seen as a special person and as part of the individual's self system. Thirdly, after a period of interactions, partners in the relationship offer more and more self-disclosure to each other. This is a sign for the increased trust for each other. Fourthly, the pair comes to function as a social unit when they deal with other people and others also treat them as such (Hinde, 1979, p. 356). Thus, based on Hinde's (1979) four types of indicators, we are going to concentrate on the following indicators to describe the development stage of relationships: intimacy; love; interdependence; commitment and trust. Indeed, these indicators can represent the growth and maintenance of relationships.

6.2.2.a Intimacy

Intimacy has been defined as '*feelings and expressions of closeness, appreciation and affection*' (Keeley and Hart, 1994, p. 153). Intimacy is neither a quality of a person alone nor something inherent in any relationship. Indeed, it has been suggested that intimacy is forged through the interaction process (Reis and Shaver, 1988; Keeley and Hart, 1994, p. 139). Studies have also shown that communication and self–disclosure are important factors for the development of intimacy (Hinde, 1979; Duck, 1977).

Intimacy and Communication

It has been suggested that communication can be enormously important in developing relationships (e.g., Hinde, 1979; Duck, 1977). Indeed, it is suggested that intimacy is developed through communication. By sharing the verbal and non-verbal symbols, people can reveal themselves to each other (Keeley and Hart, 1994). In particular, non-verbal communications play an important role in the development of intimacy between partners in a relationship (Keeley and Hart, 1994). Keeley and Hart (1994) provide the following definition for nonverbal communication as:

> *More formally, nonverbal communication refers to signs and symbols (both static and dynamic) that qualify as potential messages by virtue of their regular and consistent use and interpretation. The nonverbal rules and practices of a culture are organized into codes. Codes are organized message systems consisting of a set of symbols and the cues for their use (Keeley and Hart, 1994, p. 136)*

From the definition, there are two types of codes used in nonverbal communication.

Indeed, the 'static codes' mostly include the material objects and physical appearances. Moreover, these codes can form the environment for communication. 'Performance codes' mainly refer to the changeable, dynamic cues (such as '*body movement, facial expression, eye gaze, and personal space*') that people use in interactions (p. 136). It has been proposed that non-verbal communication can affect the quality of relationships (Keeley and Hart, 1994).

It has also been suggested that 'positivity', 'intimacy' and 'control' (Montgomery, 1988) can be used to demonstrate how non-verbal communication can affect relationship quality and relationship dynamics (Keeley and Hart, 1994). Firstly, it has been suggested that the exchange of positive or negative behaviour can affect functions of the relationship and the relationship quality. Indeed, the patterns of behaviour can create relational expressions and indicate the partners' roles in the relationship. In addition, the positive expression can also: (1) reveal awareness of each others' values; (2) support each other's emotional experiences (Cissna and Sieburg, 1981) and (3) generate the meanings of the relationship for the partners (Duck, 1994) (Keeley and Hart, 1994, p. 139). Secondly, it has been argued that the expression of intimacy depends on the interpretation of the nature of expressions and this varies over time (Keeley and Hart, 1994, p. 140-141). Moreover, the nature of expressions is more closely associated with non-verbal communications (Keeley and Hart, 1994). Thirdly, it has been suggested that people desire to be in control of their relationships (Montgomery, 1988). Montgomery (1988) identified a number of elements critical to individuals' perception of control in the relationships such as: (1) being able to make predictions and exert an effect on future happenings; (2) managing their communication and being control of the interactions; (3) having a sense of being synchronized and coordinated with their partners in interaction patterns and (4) creating shared meanings from the verbal and nonverbal symbols (Keeley and Hart, 1994).

It has been illustrated that these four elements can help us to understand how and why nonverbal symbols can impact on the interactions in personal relationships (Keeley and Hart, 1994). Moreover, it has also been suggested that non-verbal communication functions can also be used to explore relationship dynamics by the integration of Montgomery (1988) three criteria of relationship quality assessment. Indeed, at least eight functions of nonverbal behavioural functions have been listed, including: *(a) information and identification; (b) impression formation and management; (c) affect management; (d) relational intimacy, involvement and dominance; (e) managing interaction; (f) mixed messages and deception; (g) social influence; (h) message production, processing and comprehension* (Keeley and Hart, 1994, p. 144).

Intimacy and Self-Disclosure

It has been argued that the major concern of intimacy research is self-disclosure (Hinde, 1979). Indeed, Hinde (1979) has defined intimacy as a degree of self-disclosure. Through self-disclosure, relationship partners reveal all aspects of themselves from the experiential and physical to the emotional. Hinde (1979) suggested that with the development of relationships, the depth and breadth of self-disclosure all increase (p. 116). Therefore, it can be suggested that self-disclosure is an important factor for understanding and evaluating intimacy in relationships. In personal relationship research, self-disclosure has been viewed as: '*personality trait*' (Hinde, 1979); *'an act'; 'interpersonal process' and 'intrapersonal process'* (Dindia, 1994, p. 27).

In terms of the 'act' notion, self-disclosure has been described as individuals showing themselves for others (Jourard, 1971, p. 19) and verbally revealing their thoughts, feelings and experiences to others (Derlega, et al, 1993, p. 1). In addition, self-disclosure has also been regarded as a personality trait (Hinde, 1979) and a cultural and social norm. Indeed, these factors can determine the level of intimacy appropriate in a relationship (Hinde, 1979, p. 119).

Self-disclosure has also been described as an interpersonal process (e.g., Reis and Rusbult, 2004). This perspective has emphasised the effect of interaction processes on self disclosure and also stress the reciprocal nature of self-disclosure (Dindia, 1994, p. 37). Indeed, self-disclosure is only one element that creates intimacy in a relationship and the role of perceived partner responsiveness is also crucial. Moreover, it has been argued that intimacy can be enhanced when another's response to one's self-disclosure communicates understanding, validation and caring (Reis and Shaver, 1988). Therefore, Laurenceau et al (1998) conceptualised intimacy as '*a combination of self-disclosure and partner disclosure at the level of individual interactions with partner responsiveness as a partial mediator in this process*' (p. 1199). Many relationship theorists share this perspective, conceptualising intimacy as a complex process that can be explored through two levels of analysis: (a) the psychology of the individual self and (b) the psychology of interaction and relationship (Dindia, 1994; Laurenceau et al, 1998).

It has been suggested that self-disclosure can be regarded as an intrapersonal-interpersonal dialectical process (Dindia, 1994). Indeed, it can be suggested that people have multiple and often conflicting goals. These conflicting goals can therefore become the centre for integrating the three elements of self-disclosure, i.e., the act, the interpersonal and the intrapersonal processes (Dindia, 1994, p. 53). Thus, self-disclosure can become a dialectical process that occurs both within and between persons (p. 56). Indeed, Archer (1987) has also claimed that self disclosure processes can be arranged from the most intrapersonal to the most interpersonal orientation. In its most intra-personal-oriented form, self-disclosure can function as: (1) self-expression (Self – disclosure can be a means to express one's feelings); (2) Self-clarification (Self-disclosure can be a means for individuals to clarify their feelings and beliefs) and (3) Social validation (Individuals can find out where one stands in relation to others). In contrast, in the interpersonal-oriented form, self disclosure can function as social control, or be used to obtain benefits or avoid punishment from others. In addition, self-disclosure can be used interpersonally to elicit self-disclosure from others (reciprocity of self-disclosure). Finally, in the most interpersonal orientation, self-disclosure can also enhance the development of relationships through representing and negotiating the relationship (Archer, 1987, p. 53-54).

6.2.2.b Love

Love is a construct reflecting the emotional/affective aspects of relationships. Indeed, love can signify the nature, quality and growth of relationships. Love has been defined as '*a motivational state in which the goal is to preserve and promote the well-being of the valued object*' (Rempel and Burris, 2005, p. 299). This definition indicates the four essential components of love: *(1) an object to target; (2) the process of valuing the object; (3) motivational component and (4) affective component* (Rempel and Burris, 2005, p. 298).

It has been suggested that in order to understand the process of valuing, it is important to differentiate the valuing and the evaluating. Evaluating has been referred to as objective judgment of positivity or negativity. Indeed, evaluating is associated more with 'liking'. However, valuing is more than evaluating. Indeed, valuing has a motivational implication and is associated with the goal of benefiting the loved object

(Rempel and Burris, 2005, p. 299). In addition, it has been suggested that love is also a manifestation of multiple motivational systems (e.g., attachment system, the care-giving system, and the sexual attraction system). These motivations are enhanced by personal meaningful experiences and expressed in different forms (Rempel and Burris, 2005). In terms of the forms of love, we have summarised some research in Figure 5.1. Here we are going to illustrate the forms of love in consume/store relationships.

Dependence Love

This type of love is primarily based on need (Rubin, 1973; Rempbel and Burris, 2005). In dependence love, the other is valued on his/her capability to ease the sense of need. The needs can be derived from the individuals' feelings of insecurity, deficiency, or inadequacy. Indeed, it can be argued, that this type of love is instrumental in nature (Rempel and Burris, 2005, p. 304).

Enrichment Love

In this type of love, it has been suggested that the partner can become a source of physical or emotional security. For example, the partner can satisfy the other's motive for self-expansion. Indeed, the ultimate goal of this type of love is self-enhancing and continued personal wellbeing. Moreover, enrichment love is an instrumental form of love. The partner is valued for his/her 'amenity rather than subsistence' (Rempel and Burris, 2005, p. 305).

Companionate Love

This type of love has also been termed 'friendship love, brotherly love or storage love' (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1986). It has been suggested that this type of love possesses the characteristics of close couple relationships without the passionate-sexual dimensions (Berscheid and Meyers, 2005). In addition, reciprocity and mutuality can be important features for this type of love. Indeed, compassionate love can be manifested as the shared interests and activities, self-disclosure, warmth and affection, understanding and acceptance (Youniss, 1986). It has been argued that the long-term companionship, intimacy, and mutual affirmation can be labelled as companionate love. The ultimate goal of friendship/companionate love is the maintenance and promotion of a co-operative, mutually rewarding relationship (Rempel and Burris, 2005, p. 306).

In Table 6.2, we have summarised the love models for interpersonal relationship contexts.

Table 6.2 Forms of Love

Author and Study	Forms of love
Rubin (1973)	Three components: affiliative and dependency needs; predispositions to help; exclusiveness and absorption factors.
Hatfield and Walster (1978)	Two basic love forms: Passionate (desire for union with other) and compassionate.
Lee (1973)	Six forms of love: Eros (romantic love), ludus (game-playing love), storage (friend love), mamia (passionate love), agape (all giving, self-less love) and pragma (logical, shopping –list love).
Sternberg (1986)	Triangle theory of love and eight basic varieties of love by combining three fundamental relationship elements: Intimacy (closeness, connectedness, and emotional investments) Passion (arousal), and commitment
Fehr and Russell (1991)	Twenty love prototypes: Maternal love, romantic, passionate, friendship, sexual and pragophilia (i.e., outside the contact of interpersonal relationships) forms
Rempel and Burris (2005)	Six types of love: Erotic, dependence, enrichment, companionate, regard and altruistic.

6.2.3 Maintaining Relationships

It can be argued that at the stage of maintaining relationships, interdependence, commitment and trust can be the most important aspects. Let us discuss these aspects in more detail.

6.2.3.a Interdependence

We have discussed interdependence in section 6.1.2. However, in addition to the levels of interdependence, it can be argued that interdependence can also reflect the interpersonal properties of social interactions (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Kelley and Thibaut, 1978). Indeed, it has been suggested that there are four properties of interpersonal relationships: (1) the degree of dependence (concerning to what extent each member's outcomes depends on the other's behaviour); (2) mutuality of dependence (the degree of members' dependence on the relationship); (3) basis of the dependence (the nature of dependence, this nature can be: absolute or contingent) and (4) correspondence of outcomes (whether partner's outcomes correspond or conflict) (Reis and Rusbult, 2004, p. 14). It has also been argued that norms (a broad set of rules) are important for specific problems of interdependence that commonly arise from social interactions (Reis and Rusbult, 2004, p. 14). For example, Clarke and Mills (1979) have made a distinction between relationships governed by two distinct types of norms: (1) communal and (2) exchange. It has been suggested that communal relationships are those in which needs take precedence. The members in the relationship respond to their partner's needs and expect the partners to respond to their needs. Both partners tend to behave in such a manner without much attention paid to who has given how much to whom. In exchange relationships, partners are more concerned with principles of equity – preserving a fair balance of what each person puts into the relationship and what each gets out of it (Clark and Mills, 1979).

6.2.3.b Commitment

Commitment is a main feature characterising the maintenance stage of on-going relationships. Hinde (1979) has defined commitment as *"one or both parties either accept their relationship as continuing indefinitely or direct their behaviour towards ensuring its continuance or towards optimising its properties" (p. 132).* In addition, Hinde (1979) has differentiated two types of commitment: (1) commitment to continuity and (2) commitment to content. It has been argued that these two kinds of commitment can reflect relationships with different natures. Indeed, it has been suggested that for many formal and less intimate relationships, continuity may be more concerned with consistency in content. Moreover, these relationships may also be conditional upon changes in content. In contrast, for more personal relationships, continuity may emphasise just continuity without focusing on specified content. The content change might not be that important for the continuity of these relationships (Hinde, 1979).

Hinde (1979) has also differentiated two types of drives/forces for the continuity of relationships: (1) '*exogenous*' and (2) '*endogenous*' commitment (p. 132). The exogenous commitment has been referred to as the continuity and the content of the relationship imposed from outside. The endogenous commitment has been referred to as the continuity and content sought within. It has been argued that exogenous commitment may be part of the priori (condition) of the relationship (Hinde, 1979). In addition, it is suggested that there are dynamic/dialectical relationships between these two types of commitment. These relationships have been described as:

> *Endogenous commitment may lead to exogenous commitment (as when courtship lead to binding ties supported by public sanctions); and exogenous commitment to continuity may lead to endogenous commitment to consistency*

(Hinde, 1979, p. 132).

Hinde (1979) has also differentiated two types of explicit act that symbolise partners' commitment to a relationship: (1) '*private pledge*' and (2) '*public pledge*'. According to the discussion in section 6.1, people in a relationship can develop an acceptable agreed definition of the relationship in terms of the content, priorities and the rules of interactions. Moreover, people in the relationship can derive part of his/her self-concept from the knowledge of his/her membership in the relationship and attach values and emotional significance to that membership (Hinde, 1979). Hinde (1979) has described individuals' efforts to continue the relationship either by partners adapting 'role identity' or changing their behaviour to suit the other as a sign of commitment. Hence, these efforts can be regarded as contributing to the private pledge to relationships.

Hinde (1979) has also suggested that participants' action as a member of a dyad and identification with the dyad as a 'social unit' can be termed the 'public pledge'. Indeed, social identity concept can be applied to dyadic relationships. In this sense, a dyadic relationship can be treated as a social unity. Hinde (1979) has argued that in addition to the rewards from the exchange between members of the dyad, the dyad membership can enhance his/her self-concept and also bring about other rewards from the outside. These rewards can drive the members in the relationship to see the existence of the relationship as a unit. Some external social situations can also force the participants to act as a member of a dyad. This can further increase participants' identification with the unit (Hinde, 1979). Indeed, Erikson (1963) has contended that real intimacy is possible only after an individual has developed a sense of identity (Monsour, 1994, p. 129).

6.2.3.c Trust

Indeed, it is argued that trust can reflect the quality of a relationship. In addition, trust can be specific to a particular relationship with a particular partner (Hinde, 1979; Wieselquist et al, 1999, p. 944). Trust has been defined as:

> A *person's expectations that an interaction partner is able and willing to behave promotively toward the person, even when the interaction partner is free to choose among alternative behaviours that could lead to negative consequences for the person* (Koller, 1988, p. 266).

Indeed, trust can be defined as confidence and positive expectations about the outcomes from a relationship (Deutsch, 1973; Holmes and Rempel, 1986). In addition, trust can be evaluated by assessing the partner's confidence about the relationship partner in respect of his/her '*reliability, honesty and sincerity*' (Koller, 1988, p.266) in terms of the other partner's needs (Wieselquist et al, 1999). In addition, trust can also be evaluated through relationship partners' actions or reactions in certain situations (Koller, 1988, p. 267).

In addition, Holmes and Rempel (1986) have pointed out that people's trust in their relationship partners can be derived from: (1) their perceptions of the partner's attitude towards the relationship; (2) the perceived quality and intensity of the affective bond and (3) the partner's responsiveness to the needs in situations of dependency. Moreover, it has been suggested that partners in the relationship have to show their willingness to sacrifice/moderate their self-interests and also respond to others' needs at times when people rely on their good intentions in order to enhance trust in the relationship (Holmes, 1981; Clarke and Mills, 1979; Kelley, 1979). Therefore, it has been suggested that trust can comprise three necessary components: (1) '*predictability*' (reflecting the partner's behavioural consistency); (2) '*dependability*' (expecting the partner to be honest, reliable and benevolent) and (3) *'faith'* (a perception that the partner is intrinsically motivated to be responsive and caring) (Holmes and Rempel, 1986; Wieselquist et al, 1999, p.944).

It has also been suggested that the development of trust occurs as a process of uncertainty reduction (Holmes and Rempel, 1986). For example, Holmes and Rempel (1986) have taken the romantic relationship as an example and illustrated the development process of trust. At the early stage of the relationship, trust is described as the naïve hope and blind faith in the partner. However, with the development of the relationship, partners' anxiety and uncertainty increases with the increase of dependency. These anxieties and uncertainties can be solved and reduced by the actions and messages exchanged (such as sacrifice of self interest, acceptance of risks, increased attachment and involvement) (p.194). Then trust can experience the 'accommodation stage'. Nevertheless, with the further development of the relationship and the increased levels and domains of interdependence, conflicts, negativity and ambivalence often increase. The development of trust at this stage depends on the partners' willingness to moderate/sacrifice their personal interest in order to meet the needs of their partners (p.194). At this stage, the belief that the partner is intrinsically motivated to be responsive and caring is the central to trust (p.203).

Holmes and Rempel (1986) have also suggested that trust is prospective in nature. Here trust can allow people to act on a sense of security and individuals can become emotionally charged with a sense of closure. Trust also allows people to have an illusion of control, which can therefore allow them to be free from continual uncertainty and free from anxiety. In addition, it has been suggested that there are also individual differences in terms of trust. For high-trust individuals, trust can be regarded as an integrated attitude structure that can reflect their confidence about their partner's motives. For uncertain individuals, feelings of uncertainty about a partner's motives have a pervasive influence on them. Therefore they take a 'hypothesis-testing' strategy to attain a sense of security. Therefore, they will be relatively '*vigilant and monitor behaviour for any diagnostic signs*' (Holmes and Rempel, 1986, p. 214). Compared to trusting individuals, they are likely to be more vigilant and ready to interpret a wide range of actions in a negative way (Holmes and Rempel, 1986, p. 212).

6.2.4 Sustaining On-Going Relationships

In terms of sustaining on-going relationship, it can be suggested that there are possibly two mechanisms: (1) *the behavioural maintenance mechanism and (2) the cognitive maintenance mechanism* (Reis, and Rusbult, 2004, p. 15). Indeed, it has also been argued that there are three behavioural mechanisms for the maintenance of relationship. Reis and Rusbult (2004) have summarized these mechanisms as:

> *(a) Sacrifice: foregoing one's personal desires and needs, engaging instead in behaviours that are valued the partner (e.g., Van Lange et al, 1997); (b) accommodation - controlling the impulse to retaliate in response to a partner's destructive act (e.g., lack of consideration, rudeness), 'biting one's tongue' and reacting constructively (e.g., Rusbult, et al, 1991); and (c) forgiveness –finding ways to forgiving a partner's act of betrayal (e.g., McCullough, et al. 1998) (p.15)*

In addition, it has also been suggested that there are three cognitive mechanisms for the maintenance of relationships. Reis and Rusbult (2004) have summarised these mechanisms as:

> *(a) Derogation of alternatives – dealing with tempting alternative partners by exhibiting cognitive distortions, such as perceiving the alternatives as less desirable; (b) positive illusion-thinking about a partner's faults in such a manner as to minimize them or transform them into virtues, as well as idealizing a*

partner's strength by perceiving them in a very positive light (Murray and Holmes, 1993); and (c) cognitive interdependence exhibiting perceptual and cognitive tendencies that rest on 'relational' thought rather than 'self-based' thought (e.g. 'we, us, our' rather than 'I, me, mine'; e.g. Agnew et al., 1998) (p.15)

6.2.5 Deteriorating Relationships

Research has also identified the factors that can lead to the deterioration of relationships. These factors can include communication problems and conflicts.

It has been argued that with the development of a relationship, conflicts, negativity and ambivalence can often increase. For example, one kind of conflict involves incompatibility. This can occur for various reasons, such as the outcomes expected from partners are not satisfactory and they cannot manage their actions to satisfy both partners' needs. Moreover, the individuals' perceptions of the cause of this behaviour or conflict play a central role in relationship functioning (Reis and Rusbult, 2004, p. 17). Partner's values and predispositions toward each other tend to be more influential factors (Rusbult, and Van Lange, 2003). If conflicts are caused by values and predisposition mismatch, these conflicts can lead to deterioration of relationships (Reis and Rusbult, 2004).

Of course conflicts can exist in all relationships. Therefore, how the individuals deal with these conflicts is the key for the relationship functioning (Reis and Rusbult, 2004. p.16). For example, for the distressed couple, negativity and conflict can be escalated through the reciprocity of the negativity in interaction and communication. However, for the undistressed couple, interactions can ease the conflict and lead to more constructive solutions, such as accommodation (Gottman et al, 1998; Reis and Rusbult, 2004, p. 16).

6.3 Factors Influencing Relationships

It has been suggested that the factors influencing relationships can include the personality of people involved in the relationship and the social norms in which the relationship is embedded. Hinde (1979) has argued:

> *The nature of the relationship is determined /influenced by the persons in the relationship (here refer to the personality of the persons in the relationship) and also by the society (the social norms) in which the relationship is embedded. Therefore, in order to understand the relationships, it is important to consider the two factors i.e., the individual level and the societal level (Hinde, 1979, p. 4).*

At the individual level, individuals' personality can influence the formation and nature of relationships. Indeed, it has been argued that attachment style is an important personality trait that exerts great affect on relationships (Weiss, 1982). It is suggested that research has found three enduring attachment styles: 'the secure; 'anxious/ambivalent' and 'avoidant' (Hazan and Shaver, 1987).

Another personality trait that affects relationships has been referred to as 'femininity'. The term 'femininity' has been termed as the personal trait that can reflect the individuals' orientations to social interactions: communal or expressive (Reis, 1986). According to Reis (1986), individuals with high levels of femininity are thought to be more concerned about other's feelings, more emotionally open and more interested in establishing close friendships with others (p. 99).

It has also been argued that gender is another factor that can exert effects on people's behaviour in social interactions (Reis, 1986). According to Reis (1986), males tend to focus on activities, whereas females emphasise attitude and feelings in social interactions. In addition, gender is also a factor affecting the relationship dynamics (Hendrick, et al., 1984; Sherrod, 1989) and relationship styles (Hendrick, et al. 1984; Huston, et al. 1981). For example, female relationships are characterised as slow and more careful in terms of development than males. Moreover, females are concerned more with the trust and dependability of the relationship and are more accommodating of relationship violations and transgressions (Hendrick, et al. 1984; Huston, et al. 1981).

It has been revealed that sex and sex composition of the relationship can affect the nature of a social interaction, especially when the meanings of relationships are concerned. For example, it has been suggested that: (1) females can enhance the intimacy of the interaction; (2) females can be more generally intimate with others, whereas males are more selective with whom they can socialize intimately; (3) female's social interactions are more meaningful than males' same-sex interactions (even with a best friend); (4) compared to females, males' same-sex interactions involve less disclosure and are less intimate. The differences can be a feature of both superficial and close relationships; (5) Males tend to take an instrumental approach, whereas females rely on a more expressive/communal style (Reis, 1986, p.95)

Chapter Summary:

In this chapter interpersonal relationship theories have been reviewed, including the characteristics and developmental stages of relationships. These theories will be used to make sense of the bonds/connections between consumer and their stores (Chapters 9, 10, 11and 12).

CHAPTER 7

METHODS

In this chapter, the discussion will focus on 'methodology' issues. The researcher's decisions of methodological approaches adopted in the research will be described. Indeed, it is clear that methodologies employed in the research have evolved with the development of the research questions. Therefore, this chapter is also going to illustrate the evolution process of methodological approaches for the research.

7.1 Stage One: Cognitive Perspectives and Traditional Perspectives of Consumer Research

At the first stage of the research, the researcher was interested in store attraction and customer retention issues. Moreover, the research design was greatly influenced by cognitive perspectives of consumer research such as 'attitude—behaviour' and 'information processing and decision-making' frameworks. In addition, managerial values were also regarded as one priority of academic research. Under these influences, the initial research questions were formulated as: (1) examining causal relationships between store image and consumer store loyalty; (2) identifying moderators (such as demographic variables and values) and mediators (such as satisfaction and quality) that can affect these relationships. In addition, Structural Equation Modelling would be the method to be used. However, after reflections on consumer research methodologies, the researcher realised various problematic issues in respect of original research design. Thus, in order to explain the evolution of the research design in respect of research methodologies, we are now going to discuss traditional consumer research methodology on which the original research design was based on.

In consumer research, various theoretical perspectives (such as cognitive, behavioural and personal traits) have shared the notion that to a certain extent consumer actions can be predictable if characteristics of consumers (such as '*cognitive mechanisms, behavioural responses, and genetic traits*') are known (e.g., Firat, et al, 1995, p. 43-44; Marsden and Littler, 1998, p. 13). These perspectives regard that external forces (such as external environmental stimuli, e.g. Bagozzi, 1980) or internal motivating forces, e.g. Valentine, 1992) can determine consumer behaviour, as Marsden and Littler (1998, p. 13) summarized. Indeed, these approaches have shared the assumptions that '*consumers are knowable, limited entities, the characteristics of which can be captured in the same way as can the characteristics of natural phenomena*', as Morgan (1992, p. 140) argued (Marsden and Littler, 1998, p.14). Thus, the assumption underlying these theoretical perspectives is that the positivist approach in nature science can be applied in consumer research. Thus, it is argued that these perspectives signify 'determinist' ontology and also share the objective thoughts/approaches to nature science (the causal relationships between objects can be established). In addition, these approaches also reflect 'reductionist epistemology' (Marsden and Littler, 1998). As a result, it has been suggested that consumer experiences can be broken down and analysed in terms of the component parts, as O'Shaughnessy (1985) described (Marsden and Littler, 1998).

However, it has also been argued that consumer behaviour is a '*complex, interdependent system in which the isolation of a single characteristic for detailed analysis ignores the system as a whole*' (Runyon and Stewart, 1987, p. 19; Marsden and Littler, 1998, p.14). Therefore, the traditional reductionist approaches to consumer research are inherently incapable of dealing with the complexity of consumer experiences and the richness of consumer behaviour (Marsden and Littler, 1998). Moreover, the reductionist approach has made researchers face the problem of selecting variables and fitting parts of consumer experiences together (Lannon, 1996; Marsden and Littler, 1998).

Based on reflections on the consumer research methodologies, the researcher has recognised that the original research design was based on a positivistic methodology and possessed the features characterising traditional consumer research: deterministic ontology and reductive and objective epistemology. In addition, during the research design process, these features have caused many problematic issues for the researcher. For example, store image and store loyalty concepts are focused more on cognitive aspects (such as attitude, psychological commitment and information processing and decision-making processes). However, experiential aspects of shopping and consumption - such as emotions and meanings – could not be fully recognised. By reflecting on the literature on consumer store behaviour - specifically store image and store loyalty research - the researcher realises that current concepts and methods cannot fully explain this phenomenon. Indeed, the original research design was unable to explore consumer experiences in a holistic way. Thus, the richness of consumer store experiences could not be investigated in depth. Moreover, statistical models were reductive and selective in terms of choosing variables and thus could not reflect a holistic view of consumer store behaviour. Thus, the examination of causal relationships among selected variables could not enhance the understanding of consumer store choice and patronage behaviour. Therefore in order to understand consumer store behaviour more holistically, the research design changed from theory testing to phenomenon-exploration and the research methodology shifted from positivistic to interpretive approach.

7.2 Stage Two: Interpretive Perspective for Consumer Research

At this stage, the researcher strived to find ways to solve various problematic issues. Indeed, the innovative approaches employed in Fournier and Yao's (1997) and Fournier's (1998) studies were intriguing to the researcher. Instead of examining cognitive aspects of consumer brand behaviour, Fournier (1998) has focused on the meanings of brands for consumers by putting brands back in consumers lived experiences and through exploring various kinds of connections between consumers and their brands. Indeed, these approaches have allowed Fournier and her colleagues to investigate consumer brand behaviour from a holistic perspective and to investigate experiential aspects of consumption experiences.

Thus, at the second stage of research, the research question aims to understand store meanings for consumers and to explore the phenomena of consumer/store relationships. The research takes interpretive perspective, which focuses on understanding consumer behaviour at individual level. Instead of examining cognitive aspects, the research aims to gain insights into store meanings for consumers through the exploration of consumers' lived shopping and consumption experiences. This approach can also allow the researcher to explore consumer store behaviour from a holistic approach by considering cultural, societal, experiential and critical dimensions of consumer experiences (O'Brien, 1993; Thompson, 1996).

The second stage research design has features associated with interpretive perspective of consumer research such as 'freedom' and 'holistic' (Marsden and Littler, 1998). 'Freedom' here means that to a certain extent, consumers have a capability to create meanings rather than just passively respond to circumstances (Hirschman, 1986;

Calder and Tybout, 1987). Therefore, the focus of research can be consumers' 'subjective' meanings, which are inherently contextualised. Thus, it is argued that consumers can be more fully understood as totalities by taking the 'holistic' approach. Consumer behaviour can make sense by linking them with the individuals' lived experiences in certain personal, social and cultural contexts.

Methodologically, the researcher decided to take the existential phenomenological approach employed in Fournier's (1998) research on consumer brand relationships. Thompson et al (1989; 1990) developed the existential phenomenological approach for consumer research, which has been regarded as a set of techniques for gathering, analyzing and interpreting data (e.g., Thompson et al 1990; Fournier, 1998). However, in order to implement these techniques adequately in its authentic form, we need to have an understanding of existential phenomenology at the philosophical (ontological and epistemological) level and also an understanding of the methods at a practical level.

7.3 Transcendental and Existential Phenomenology

Phenomenology was first developed by Edmund Husserl, whose seminal works were further developed by Alfred Schutz as well as by existential-phenomenologist such as Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre. It has been pointed out that the diverse nature of phenomenological methods has made the summary of major philosophical tenets difficult (Hammond et al, 1991). Therefore, we are going to focus on Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenological approaches.

7.3.1 Husserl's Phenomenology

Husserl's phenomenology can be described as a practice that people '*describe things as one experiences them*' (Hammond et al, 1991, p.1). Phenomenology practice emphasises that people '*get to the truth of matters, to describe phenomena...as what ever appears in which it appears...as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer*' (Moran, 1999, p.4). In addition, these descriptions must be '*presuppositionless' or 'free from prejudice'* (Hammond, et al, 1991, p.3). Moran (1999) also pointed out that *presentive intuition* is at the core of Hurssel's philosophy (P.10). Intuition can be accessed when '*one places oneself within the object in order to coincide with that which is unique in it and consequently inexpressible*' (Moran, 1999, p.10). Indeed, for Hurssel, phenomenology can be a way of disclosing the 'true' meaning with absolute certainty through penetrating into reality (Jones, 1975; Koch, 1995; Laverty, 2003). Moreover, for Hurssel, phenomenon can be studied through consciousness. Consciousness was viewed as a '*co-constituted dialogue between a person and the world*' (Valle et al, 1989; Laverty, 2003, p.5). Access to consciousness is through '*intentionality*', which is a process where the mind is directed toward the objects of study. Indeed, through intentionality, one could describe particular realities and access the ultimate structures of consciousness, which have been described as: '*essences that made the object identifiable*' (Laverty, 2003, p.5). However, for Hursserl, our conscious experiences can be inhibited and distorted by our previous experiences, practical concerns, assumptions and scientific knowledge. In addition, our experiences and knowledge can also block us from '*a pure consideration of experiences as it is given to us*' (Moran, 1999, p.11). Therefore, in order to '*access the essences of the phenomena'*, Hurssel has proposed a number of methods such as: '*suspension of natural attitude and methodological reduction)'* (Moran, 1999, p.11). Indeed, for Hurssel, individual needs to '*bracket out the outer world as well as individual biases...judgments, beliefs about a phenomenon in order to see it clearly*' (Laverty, 2003, p. 6). This suspension is termed the '*phenomenological epoche*' or '*bracketing*' (Hammond, et al, 1991, p.4).

It has been suggested that the final period of Husserl's work (represented by *The Crisis*) focused on the relationship between the scientific and the lived world (Hammond, 1991, p. 5). Husserl argued that '*the only real properties of things are those that are experienced in everyday life*' (Hammond, 1991, p.5). It has been suggested that Husserl's work on the 'lived world' has provided the 'departure point' for existential phenomenology (Hammond, et al, 1991).

7.3.2 Heidegger's Existential Phenomenology

Heidegger's existential phenomenology begins with the view of '*being-in-the-world*', which means that human beings exist as a being/self being embedded/immersed in the world, which consists of 'things' and 'other persons'. Blackham described 'being-in-the-world' as '*being of a self in its inseparable relations with a not-self, the world of things and other persons in which the self always and necessarily finds itself inserted*' (Blackham, 1951, p. 88). Being-in-the world is the structure of human existence-'*the mode of existence of human being*' – 'Dasein' (p.88). Indeed, '*the world'* has been described as '*a world of brute existence already elaborated and organized into routine possibilities by the realization of other'* (Blackham, 1951, p. 90). For Heidegger, brute existence itself is '*impenetratable, a night, out which I came to, to which I return*' (Blackham, 1951, p. 102). Indeed, '*Dasein gives meanings to brute existence in terms of its projects, it creates truth'* (Blackham, 1951, p. 91). The essence of Dasein lies in the possibility and the individuals' choice of the possibilities (p. 88).

However, the realisation of possibilities is constrained by the world. Therefore, for Heidegger, '*human existence cannot be approached directly and the phenomenon is even distorted when we attempt to reflect on it*' (Moran, 1999, p. 223). Indeed, human existence signifies meanings and appears to the individual in his own unique way. For Heidegger, human existence is some specific personal existence. Indeed, human existence entails the *fundamental structures of human 'concern' and 'care'* (Moran, 1999, p. 224). For individuals, the sense of existence comes from the acts about which he/she has 'anxious concerns' (Moran, 1999, p. 223). It is suggested that it is individuals' activities and projects that constitute an intelligible world for the individuals. Thus, the personal existence can give intelligibility and meaning to the brute existence (Blackham, 1951, p.102).

Human existence also involves ways of relating to time (Moran, 1999, p. 224). Heidegger has also described the structure of Dasein as 'Care'. Heidegger suggested that ' *care is the structure of the mode of existence of one who exists by anticipating what he will be in the world in which he is found and to which he is bound'* (Blackham, 1951, p.95). Indeed, the structure of *Care* indicates the temporality of personal existence: past, future and present (Hermann, 2007). Thus, *'every moment of factical life is a profound tension between what is given to us and how we confront it in the present. Life is a kind of unrest, forever torn between two poles of reality. Life is a movement, or 'motility' (Hermann, 2007, p. 29).* Heidegger has emphasised that individuals can only experience the '*factical life*'. Moran (1999) pointed out that the term 'factical life' as the emphasis on *'the contingent nature of human existence, but also its concreteness, its faciticity*' (p. 224). Therefore, for Heidegger, in order to interpret human existence, it can be a process of *'hermeneutics of factical life'* (Moran, 1999, p.224). In order to understand personal existence, individuals have to take the '*hermeneutical, historical mode of approach*' (Moran, 1999, p. 223). Moran described this approach as:

> *An interpretation of human existence cannot be neutral, dispassionate,*

theoretical contemplation, but must take into account the enquirer himself-or herself in the understanding. Human beings are involved with their existence in such a way that hermeneutics must be able to accomplish this movement backwards and forwards between the existence to be examined and the nature of the examining enquirer (Moran, 1999, p. 197).

Moran (1999) emphasised the way of understanding the meanings of personal existence through interpretation and the way of interpretation should be conducted through movement backwards and forwards between the inquirer and the examined.

For Heidegger, three elements constitute the 'world' in the concept 'being-in-the-world". The 'world' constitutes the 'self', 'things' and 'other persons'. In addition, the individual's preoccupations in the world (such as tasks, concerns, cares, pursuits) can demonstrate/represent his/her manner of existence. Therefore, it has been argued that the immediate world for individuals is the world of the individuals' '*preoccupations*' not the world of objects (Blackham, 1951, p. 89). In addition, objects here are not only referred to physical things (tools) but things of specific use to individuals. Things are systematically connected with other things for the individuals' interests. If the meaning of human existence depends on the possibilities of action, the meanings of things lie in their functions for individuals to realise these possibilities (Blackham, 1951, p. 92). Indeed, for Heidegger, things '*are constituted by their relations to other things in the world and to an existence of the nature of Dasein*' (Blackham, 1951, p. 89). For Heidegger, things are more than its appearance, more than its usefulness or physically present-at-hand but they are the existent '*being-ready-to-hand*' (Blackman, 1951, p. 89). Indeed, they are objects in the world and they constitute the world and in order to understand them, interpretation is required (Hermann, 2007).

The qualities of things emerge within factical life itself, and are not just external

> *properties of these things. Things have meaning only because human Dasein has the structure of care. This means that human Dasein can take a stand within the world, occupied with it* (Hermann, 2007, p. 29).

Phenomenology and existential phenomenology have guided social science research methodology (both ontology and epistemology). In the next two sections, the researcher is going to discuss the methodological issues associated with phenomenological inquiry.

7.4 Phenomenological Inquiry and Constructivist Ontology

In the natural sciences, it is assumed that there is a certain regularity and order to natural events. Human reasoning can be applied systematically to investigate natural events. Consequently, universal laws can be generated to explain these events. Therefore, natural events can be predicted and controlled (Yanow, 2006). These assumptions reflect the basic presuppositions of positivism. In addition, positivism has been extended from the physical and natural world to the social and human world. The ontological proposition of positivism for the social and human world is that there is a reality out there to be discovered and captured. Indeed, positivists regard social or human science as the 'science of society' and believe that behaviour of human subjects can be measured objectively and scientifically in the same way as the subject matter of natural sciences. The laws for human behaviour can also be discovered and then human behaviour can be predicted and controlled (McNeill and Chapman, 2005; Hawkesworth, 2006). However, we can argue that ontologically, phenomenological inquiry fundamentally rejects positivism for the following reasons.

Firstly, one fundamental tenet of Husserl's phenomenology is the rejection of the privileged philosophical status of empirical sciences in social sciences. Husserl's phenomenology rejects scientific realism. For Husserl:

> *The account of the external world provided by the sciences has no such privileged philosophical status, and is to be seen as a kind of abstraction from the only 'real' world, namely that which is pre-scientifically experienced* (Hammond, et al, 1991, p.3).

Moreover, Husserl (The Crisis) emphasized that there are two properties of things: (1) the primary properties that can be measured and quantified by empirical sciences and (2) the secondary properties that only exist in the realm of private experience. Indeed, Husserl argues that '*the real properties of things are those that are experienced in everyday life*' (Hammond et al, 1991, p. 5). Thus the primary properties of things derived from sciences can only have '*ontological priority over the scientific world*' (Hammond, et al, p. 5-6). In contrast, for the phenomenologists, the lived world is revealed in everyday perception. These everyday perceptions are not directly accessible to empirical sciences.

Secondly, phenomenological inquiry rejects the notion of a generation of objective laws to explain human behaviour. For example, according to Hammond et al (1991), Merleau-Ponty distinguishes the '*universe*' and the '*lived–through-world*' (lived world) corresponding to 'objective thoughts' and 'phenomenological practice'. Indeed, for Merleau-Ponty, the 'universe' can be described as *'a world consists of clearly identifiable objects... These objects can interact causally with each other and their properties are open, in principle to a complete description and causal explanation*' (Hammond, et al, 1991, p. 131). Thus, empiricists strive to identify the causal explanations for what is perceived and they take their task as '*to understand how human manage to perceive the world as characterized by objective thoughts*' (Hammond, et al, 1991, p. 131). However, Merleau-Ponty argues that these empiricists make the fundamental error because the world that human perceive is not like the 'universe'. From phenomenological perspective, the world is perceived as a lived world. Merleau-Ponty has defined human being's world of everyday experience as:

> *It is not 'objective'. It consists of 'objects' whose properties are not fully specifiable or determinate, but inherently non-determinate and even ambiguous; between these objects there obtain relationships of meaning and reciprocal expression, not of causal determination; they are not uniquely located in a single spatial framework, but varyingly situated in relation to the human agent's specific field of action; and so on* (Hammond et al, 1991, p.131).

For Merleau-Ponty, meanings of objects are non-determinate and the relationships between objects are not causal. These meanings and relationships can only be understood when they are located in human agents' actions in specific contexts. Indeed, humans actively engaged in the world. Individuals can exercise their ability to make choices and impose meanings. Therefore in order to study the lived world, it is important to '*consider the totality of human relationships in the world in terms of individuals' concrete experiences'* (Stewart and Mickunas, 1974, p. 64). (See detailed discussion on Merleau-Ponty rejection on the objective thoughts in Hammond, et al, 1991, p.133-142)

Heidegger's existential phenomenology also begins with the view of 'being-in-the-world'. In order to understand everyday perception, the focus has to be the lived world, which is temporal, contextual and historical. Human existence is personal existence. It is individuals' activities and projects that constitute an intelligible world and personal existence constitute meanings (Blackham, 1951, p.102). Indeed, Thompson et al (1989) has argued that trying to predict knowledge through the construction of generalisable laws that remain 'true' across time and space is untenable in phenomenological terms. Indeed, the world of 'lived experiences' does not always correspond to objective descriptions trying to explain an event or experiences as separate from its contextual setting. Moreover, Guba and Lincoln (1994) have described the generalization process (positivist approach) as 'context stripping' that is not tenable for the phenomenological notion.

Thirdly, one fundamental view of phenomenology is the rejection of objectivity. Moran (1999) has suggested that phenomenology rejects the notion that knowledge is explained in terms of '*an inner mental representation or copy of what exists outside the mind*' (p.5). In order to describe our experiences and meanings, according to Hurssel, we have to acknowledge that they are embedded in the 'world' and therefore, any account of knowledge has to remain faithful to the experiential evidence (Moran 1999, p.6). Indeed, phenomenology stresses the fundamental role of subjectivity and consciousness in describing existence and meanings (Moran, 1999) and phenomenology rejects the dichotomy between the inner world of 'private' experience and outer world of 'public objects'. Therefore, Moran (1999) suggests that

> *Indeed, the whole point of phenomenology is that we cannot split off the subjective domain from the domain of the natural world as scientific naturalism has done. Subjectivity must be understood as inextricably involved in the process of constituting objectivity... There is only objectivity-for-subjectivity* (Moran, 1999, p.15).

Thus, it can be suggested that phenomenological inquiries reject regarding the objective thoughts and the universal laws as the priori of social research.

7.5 Phenomenological Inquiries and Constructive-Interpretive Epistemology

We have discussed the dialectic relationship between individuals and the 'lived world'. The essence of human beings lies in the possibilities and individuals' choice of these possibilities. These possibilities can only be explained locally and contextually. Indeed, the 'factical life' entails the contingent nature of existence. There are multiple realities that can be constructed and altered by human agents.

Therefore, reality is not something out there but something constructed locally. Realities are not more or less true but more or less informed (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Therefore, we can argue that making sense of individuals' experiences is a constructive process in nature. It is the individual's activities and projects that form an intelligible world and create meanings for individuals' personal existence. From an existential phenomenology perspective, meanings of human existence and meanings of objects are situated in individuals' lived-experiences. The aim of phenomenological inquiries is therefore to explore and describe the 'lived experience' from the perspective of who experiences it, and then explore the meanings that individuals ascribe to their experiences. Therefore, it is essentially a process of interpretation and description. Indeed, Patton (1990) has argued that the focus on lived experiences has certain methodological implications and the individual's interpretation of the experience is an essential part of the experiences itself. Therefore, from the philosophical stance, in order to capture the phenomenon from the individual's lived experiences in the lived world and the subjective meanings the individuals ascribed to the phenomenon, phenomenological inquiry locates itself within a long-established interpretive tradition (Thompson, et al, 1989). Indeed, it reflects Heidegger's recognition that all description involves interpretation (Moran, 1999). Therefore, epistemologically, phenomenology enquiry can be located in interpretive framework.

Yanow (2006) has suggested that phenomenological analysis is constructive in nature. It has been argued that in contrast with the positivistic approach to social and human sciences, it has been argued that '*social scientific texts do not merely present their subjects through the lenses of their data, but represent and re-present-constitute, construct – them*' (Yanow, 2006, p. 7).

In terms of way of doing research, the positivist traditions have emphasised: (1) the duality between the researcher and the researched and (2) the value-free, disinterested scientist stance from the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). In addition, these traditions emphasize that specific methods should be used to reduce the bias caused by the researcher's influence. Moreover, internal/external validity, reliability and objectivity are the criteria to evaluate the positivistic research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). In addition, it has been accepted that this research method can be applied to natural sciences. However, in the social sciences, the duality between the knower and the known has been questioned. Indeed, the researchers' value-free stance has also been questioned. It has also been argued that the positivistic approach can result in '*the loss of certain kinds of knowledge about human experience, such as meaning making*' (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993; Jaggar, 1989; Laverty, 2003, p. 13). In contrast, it has been argued that the interpretive approach has focused on understanding and the construction-reconstruction of experience and knowledge. Therefore, the duality between the researcher and the researched can be replaced by interaction and co-participation in the research process. Indeed, Jackson (2002) has described constructive-interpretive epistemology as '*inter-subjectivity negotiations of meaning and processes of social transaction*' (Cited by Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006, p.xxvi).

7.6 The Application of Existential Phenomenology to Consumer Research: Thompson's Work

Thompson et al (1990) has discussed the application of existential phenomenology to consumer research. The basic assumption of Thompson's method is that '*a person's life-world is a socially contextualized totality in which experiences interrelate coherently and meaningfully*' (p.347). In addition, Thompson's phenomenological method involves three central concepts: (1) *'intentionality'; (2) 'emergent dialogue' and (3) 'hermeneutic endeavour'* (p.347). Intentionality has emphasised the relationship between individual's experiences and the objects experienced. The focus of investigation should be the participant's lived experience. Therefore, researchers' theories and concepts should not be the primary concern. Thus, the notion of 'emergent dialogue' has emphasized that in interviews, dialogue should be set and led by the participants. In other words, the interview questions and comments are formulated by following the participants' descriptions. It has been argued that this format of interview parallels the emergent design characteristic of naturalistic inquiries (Wallendorf and Belk 1989). 'Hermeneutic endeavour' has emphasized the 'iterative back-and-forth' process in the data analysis process. Indeed, it is argued that the interview can be analyzed ideographically and then common patterns (themes) can be identified. Moreover, Thompson's method emphasized the link between the parts to the whole text. Indeed, it is the text that provides the focus for interpretation and therefore the analysts must show where participants' descriptions support the thematic interpretation. Interpretive patterns should also be visible and comprehendible to other readers. In addition, it is argued that interpretations should be continuously revised in order to obtain more understanding of the text. These notions can reflect the essence of the 'hermeneutic' nature of the data analysis process.

In the data analysis process, 'bracketing' has also been emphasized. For Thompson et al (1990), the process of bracketing refers to methodological procedures that enable the researcher to see the text from a phenomenological perspective without predefining participants' experiences in terms of the researcher's interpretive framework. Indeed, we can see that on the one hand, Thompson et al (1990) has stressed the suspension of the researchers' assumptions and concepts. But on the other hand, they also emphasized that the data analysis process is a hermeneutic circle. In addition, Thompson et al (1990) also stressed that the interpretation process can be affected by the motives of the study (p.347). This contradiction will be further discussed in the reflexivity sections.

Thompson, et al (1989) has also illustrated the operation of phenomenological methods in data collection. They discussed the 'phenomenological interview'. The phenomenological interview possesses the following features. Firstly, there is '*no prior questions*'. Indeed, the course of the conversation is led by the questions set by the participant. In addition, the interview should follow the flow of the dialogue. Secondly, conversations should be 'contextualized'. Indeed, the interviewer should create an environment in which participants can describe their experiences freely. The interviewer should also create contexts that can reflect specific events. These events can then provide the opportunity for the participants to provide a more detailed description of their experiences. Thirdly, the relationship between the respondent and the interviewer should be equal. The aim of the questioning and the probing should be generating participants' descriptions of lived experiences. Fourthly, interviewer should use descriptive questions - including the 'what question' and 'the how question' - and use the respondents' own words when asking the following up questions. Indeed, the interviewer should avoid using the 'why questions'. To sum up, Thompson et al (1989) have emphasized that the existential phenomenological interview aims to elicit existential and experiential descriptions of participants lived experiences in their life world. Indeed, we can see that the interview process described by Thompson et al (1989, 1990) has emphasized the objectivity and detachment of the researcher in the process. This issue will be further discussed in the reflexivity sections.

At stage two, the PhD researcher had planned to employ Thompson et al (1989; 1990) methods to guide the research process. However, the researcher had been concerned about the 'naturalistic interview' and the 'bracketing issues' which have been emphasised in Thompson et al (1990, 1989) existential phenomenological inquiry. In addition, the PhD researcher also confronted challenges in data collection and data analysis processes when the researcher conducted fieldwork. Indeed, honest account of the research process has been regarded as an important part of qualitative research (e.g. Sherry and Schouten, 2002, Kleinsasser, 2000; Bettany and Woodruffe-Burton, 2006*)*. Therefore, at the writing up stage, instead of neglecting the problematic issues the researcher has encountered in the research process, the researcher will undertake self-reflexive reporting. The self-reflexivity on methodological issues will concentrate on: (1) naturalistic interview and researcher –researched relationship; (2) primacy of individuals' lived experiences and gender issues; (3) bracketing and hermeneutic method.

7.7 Existential Phenomenological Inquiries and Interview Formats

It has been suggested that interviews - in terms of the focus and operation of interview process - can be divided into two groups (naturalistic and constructivist) (Elliott, 2005). Indeed, ontologically, naturalistic approach regards the social world as an external reality 'out there' for researchers to observe and describe. In contrast, the constructivist approach views the social world as being made and constructed. Hence, the focus of constructivist research is on the production of the social world. In addition, at the operational level, it has been argued that naturalist approach focuses on '*seeking rich descriptions of people as they exist and unfold in their nature habitus*' (Elliott, 2005, p. 18). Therefore, naturalist interview is described as a process to '*collect detailed information from the interviewee*' (Elliott, 2005, p. 20). In contrast, constructivist approach has seen the interview itself as 'an enquiry itself' (Elliott, 2005, p.18). Indeed, researchers can be more sensitive to the interview process. The constructive approach views interview as a process through which meanings and social world are created within the interaction between the researcher and the respondent (Elliott, 2005, p. 19). In addition, another way of differentiating the naturalist or constructivist approach to interviews is through the central research questions. Essentially the naturalist approach focuses on 'what questions', whereas, the constructivist approach focuses more on the 'how questions' (Elliott, 2005, p. 19).

As illustrated previously, existential phenomenology method is constructive-interpretive. The way to explore the meanings that individuals ascribed to their experiences is through interpretation, construction and reconstruction of these experiences and meanings. The interpretation process is a hermeneutic process in which the inquirer and the examined are co-participants and work jointly to make sense of individuals' lived world and their personal existence. Lincoln (1990) described that constructionist epistemology can affect the ways of conducting research by: (1) rejecting the *'positivist subject-object dualism and objectivism'*; (2) recognizing the importance of *'the interactivity between the researcher and the researched'*; (3) regarding the research process as a *'teaching and learning process'* between the researcher and the researched; (4) being reflexive: the values (inherent in the research process in terms of *the choice of a problem, the choice of an overall design strategy, the choice of the setting, and the decision to honour and present the values that inhere in the site(s))* should be explored and made clear and be regarded as part of the research product (Lincoln, 1990, p.78).

Thus, we can suggest that the interview format described by Thompson et al (1990) and Thompson et al (1989) seems to be located in the 'naturalistic interview' group.

These traditional interview techniques have aimed to maintain neutrality and achieve objectivity (Fontana and Frey, 2000). However, we can suggest that for the implementation of existential phenomenological methods, the interview format does not need to follow the naturalistic group's techniques. Indeed, it has been suggested that the interview format for constructive inquiry can be more interactive (Lincoln, 1990). Indeed, some researchers such as Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) and Gould (1995) have objected to the notion of objectivity and distance in consumer research. In contrast, they have advocated the use of researcher introspection in the research process (Goulding, 1999).

In addition, in terms of methodology, the researcher argues that feminism as perspective can also provide valuable guidance for the research process. Instead of implementing the naturalistic interview, the researcher has employed constructivist-feminist interview format in the existential phenomenological inquiry. Firstly, feminist notion of researcher-researched relationships is compatible with the interpretivist-constructionist stance. For example, the interpretivists' notion of the researcher-researched relationships in knowledge generation process is interactive to create '*cooperative inquiry*' (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988, p. 521). Indeed, Zuckerman and Carsky (1992) have also pointed out the belief, shared by the feminist scholars, that in the research process, the researcher and the participant are interconnected not independent (Gergen, 1988, p. 94). Therefore, feminist research methodology stresses co-participation between the researcher and the researched (Driscoll and McFarland, 1989). Indeed, it has been argued that feminist researchers conduct interviews in a '*more participatory way*' (Bettany and Woodruffe-Burton, 2006, p. 229).

We need to point out that the feminist approach employed in the research has been the approach, which regarded feminism as a perspective, rather than the value-laden critical approach or a political stance. Indeed, many feminist scholars (e.g., Zuckerman and Carsky, 1992; Woodruffe-Burton, 2001; Bettany and Woodruffe-Burton, 2006) have recognised and shared this perspective. For example, Zuckerman and Carsky (1992) described what this perspective entails:

> *A feminist approach does not only focus on women and gender, although that is its fundamental perspective. However, it also takes a holistic view of research, recognizing the interrelationships that exist between constructs within a domain. The perspective advocates a non-hierarchical methodology, wherein subjects are treated as equal partners with an investigator. It maintains that research cannot be value-free because both the values of the researcher and the traditions of the discipline guide inquiry* (Zuckerman and Carsky, 1992, p. 464).

Secondly, at the operational level, instead of taking the conventional views of interviewing, the researcher has explored alternative ways of interviewing. Indeed, feminist approach to interviewing has guided the interview process.

At the operational level, it has been argued that the conventional view of interviews has regarded respondents as '*passive vessels of answers and repositories of facts, feelings and the related particulars of experience*' (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003, p. 12). Therefore, it has been argued that conventional interview requires the interviewers to be neutral and implement the disinterested practices to elicit objective truth and avoid bias. Thus, the interviewer has to be passive and stand apart from the actual data. In contrast, it is suggested that interviewers can behave as a facilitator and use interpersonal skills to encourage the interviewee to express their attitude, sentiments and information (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003, p. 13). Hence, conventional views of interviewing have been criticised and alternative ways of interviewing have also been developed.

Firstly, it has been argued that conventional views of interviewing represent the 'masculine paradigm', which has been challenged by Oakley (1981, p. 31-41). Indeed, Oakley (1990) has advocated a new model of 'feminist' interviewing. The feminist view of the interview stresses the non-hierarchy and equality relationships between interviewer and interviewee. Indeed, the interviewers cannot only regard the interviewee as sources of data. Instead of being neutral and disinterested, the interviewer can encourage the respondents to regard the interviewer as a friend and intimacy and self disclosure are also stressed (Oakley, 1990, p. 47-48).

Secondly, the notion of eliciting truth and avoidance of being biased has been challenged. For example, Holstein and Gubrium (2003) has pointed out 'new light' of interviews, which stresses '*heightened awareness of the constructedness of meaning*' (p.4). It is suggested that

> *The interview is more than a simple information-gathering operation; it's a site of, and occasion for, producing knowledge itself. ... interviews fundamentally shape the form and the content of what is said.. interviews virtually impose particular ways of understanding reality upon subjects' responses* (Holstein and Gubrium , 2003, p. 4).

Indeed, Mischer (1986) also compared the interview to 'interactional accomplishment' and 'discourse between speakers'. It is further illustrated:

> *The discourse of the interview is jointly constructed by the interviewer and respondent... an adequate understanding of interviewers depends on recognizing how the interviewers reformulate the questions and how respondents frame answers in terms of their reciprocal understanding as meanings emerge during the course of an interview* (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003, p. 52).

Thus it can be suggested that interviews can be viewed as the process in which the researcher and the researched jointly interpret and construct the meanings. From the researcher's interview experiences and her reflections on the alternative approaches to interview formats, the researcher has taken some of these issues into account in conducting interviews.

7.8 Existential Phenomenological Inquiries and 'Bracketing'

As discussed in section 7.3, bracketing is one measure in Hurssel's transcendental phenomenology. For Husserl, in order to experience the phenomena directly with the 'transcendental ego' or 'conscious experience', everyday assumptions must be suspended. However, as Hermann (2007) has summarised, Heidegger has rejected the notion of 'bracketing' in phenomenological inquiry for the following rationales:

> *To reduce things to phenomena, to bracket the world, is wrong. It suppresses the fact that they are my experiences. By reducing life to a series of appearances ... it merely turns them into a 'what', or a set of objective qualities. It turns the world into nothing but a series of essences, and in this way stifles the existence of things. Phenomenology makes it sound that I was a calm, antiseptic observer... But there is no such separation between me and the world... By putting essence before existence, quality before being, phenomenology misses the question of being altogether ... reducing things to qualities might work if those things were rocks or trees. But what if there were some entity that had no 'what', and this entire reality consisted solely in its act of being? ... Human Dasein can never be reduced to a Spock-like emotionless observer who witnesses colors and shapes, because the very nature of Dasein lies in its inescapable existence, deeper than all its specific properties. We are stuck in the world. And we care about it. We are implicated in it* (Hermann, 2007, p. 4).

Indeed, it can be suggested that existential phenomenologist have abandoned the concept of 'bracketing'. However, as we described previously that Thompson et al (1990) has emphasized 'bracketing' in the data analysis process.

> *The process of bracketing refers to methodological procedures that allow for seeing the text from a phenomenological perspective without predefining participants' experiences in terms of the interpretive framework (Thompson, et al, 1990, p.347).*

Bracketing here has been referred to as the researcher's role in the interview and data analysis/interpretive process (Bettany and Woodruffe-Burton, 2006). Indeed, we can suggest that 'bracketing' in Thompson's existential phenomenological method does share some similarities with 'bracketing' notion in Hurssel's transcendental phenomenology. Thompson et al (1990) stress the importance of suspending any interpretive framework ('everyday assumptions' in Hurssel's phenomenology) when the researcher analyse the data. However, Thompson et al (1990) also emphasised that the data analysis process can be a hermeneutic circle. It can be suggested that 'bracketing' and 'hermeneutic' notion can be contradictory.

Firstly, at the philosophical level, for Heidegger, interpretation of human existence has been described as a hermeneutic circle (Moran, 1999; Hermann, 2007). Indeed, 'Being-in-the-world', the existence mode of human being (Dasein) as the basic tenet for existential phenomenology, emphasises that human beings are in a world which constitutes the individual being, the world of things and other people. Thus, in addition to 'Dasein', Heidegger also introduced another concept 'Das Man'- 'the they'. The 'they' can signify the existence of public reality. Hermann (2007) described that '*this public reality is one of the existentials of human Dasein, a category of Dasein's being that can never be removed no matter how hard we try' (p.34).* Thus, it can be suggested that the 'public reality' is the background against which individuals' personal existence can make sense. The interpretation can only be conducted through the movement between the subjectivity and the intersubjectivity.

Secondly, at the practical level, Gadamer has described the hermeneutic circle:

> *It is neither subjective, nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter. The anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from a commonality that binds us to the tradition (Gadamer, 1985, p. 293) (*McAuley, 2004, *p.194)*

Gadamer's description of the hermeneutic circle has also underpinned the relationship between the personal existence and the public reality. Yanow (2006) further illustrated the relationship between subjective meanings and the public reality:

> *Subjective perception and understanding themselves draw on the repertoire of collectively created and sanctioned meanings particular to that community and shared within it by its members. The community's traditions, practices, language, and other cultural elements provide the material out of which individuals craft their meaning making of everyday events. ...These collective understandings provide the backdrop for individuals' constructions of their own meanings; individual subjectivity, in other words-the contents of individual consciousness- is embedded within social practices and collective presuppositions (p.11)*

As described earlier, Thompson et al (1989) stress the interpretive mode for the phenomenological inquiry with understanding as the focus. Yanow (2006) illustrated the underpinning essence of '*understanding*' as:

> *making clear people's interpretations of their own and other's experiences, leading to the discovery of context-specific meaning. Verstehen, then, concerns human subjectivity and inter-subjectivity as both subjects of and explanations for human action* (Yanow, 2006, p. 10)

Thus, the understanding process includes interpretation of individual's context-specific meanings (subjectivity) and collective practices (inter-subjectivity). Both subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, which can provide explanation for human actions, should all be understood. This process can affect relationship between the researcher and the researched. Thus, the relationship between the researcher and the researched has been described as:

> *a situated entity: meaning making and the specific meanings made by each one are contextualized by prior knowledge and by history and surrounding elements (other events, other experiences)* (Yanow, 2006, p. 13).

In addition, phenomenology inquiry is construction in nature. Indeed, Yanow (2006) described the ontological construction notion proposed by Alfred Schutz. Indeed, here construction entails 'social' nature:

> *This is what is 'social' about ontological constructivism: that it has a shared character, developed in the course of living in common, interacting through the medium of political, cultural, and other artefacts in which the meanings embedded in these artefacts come to be known, tacitly, even when such communication is nonverbal* (Yanow, 2006, p. 14).

Thus understanding is a meaning making process. Both the researcher and the researched can contribute to the process by bring in prior knowledge and experiences. Meanings are 'social' and shared by people in the cultural and social contexts. Therefore, the aim of phenomenological inquiry is:

> *The creation of intersubjectivity understanding...- which is developed between two or more 'subjectivities' was the central concern of the phenomenologist Alfred Schutz, in his effort to understand how individual makes sense of another's acts* (Yanow, 2006, p.14).

According to Alfred Schuts,

> *The concept of intersubjectivity, operative in an ontological sense, enables a conceptualization of collective action that is, or may be otherwise problematic. ...The phenomenological observation that ongoing interaction leads to communities of interpretation and of practice, while not denying individual differences. The phenomenological concept of intersubjectivity that enables such a conceptulization of collective social reality stands in direct opposition to a methodological individualism that denies the significance, if not the very existence of historical-cultural-social constructions other than those made through the choice of individuals* (Yanow, 2006, p.15).

Therefore, we can suggest that in the data analysis process, researchers and the researched can work together to create the 'intersubjectivity': sense making of the collective actions. In this process, the researcher can draw ideas and concepts from the repertoire of collectively shared constructs to make sense of individuals' personal meanings and experiences. It has been argued that concepts and theories can become 'part of historical background'. Moreover, these theories can provide the 'contexts for scholarly thinking' and 'resources' (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006, p.xvii). Therefore, the notion of 'bracketing' (suspension of existing ideas and concepts) cannot enhance the interpretation process.

7.9 Stage Three: Phenomenological Inquiry and Feminist Perspective

Phenomenological inquiry emphasises the contextual and temporal nature of reality. Indeed, it can be suggested that in order to understand participants' lived experiences, social, economic and cultural factors should also be taken into account. At the philosophical level:

> *Heidegger's hermeneutic ontology (Being and time): Heidegger's phenomenology stresses the idea that human subjects are formed by the historical cultural practices in which they develop. These practices form a background, which can never be made completely explicit, and so cannot be understood in terms of the beliefs of a meaning-giving subject. The background practices do, however, contain a meaning. They embody a way of understanding and coping with things, people and institutions. Heidegger calls this meaning in practices an interpretation, and proposes to make manifest certain general features of this interpretation. In being and time, he calls this method, which amounts to giving interpretation of the interpretation embodied in everyday practice, hermeneutics* (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p.xxi)

Thompson et al (1990) has also suggested

> *Although social context is seen as the fundamental ground from which all meanings emerge, primacy is placed on the perspective of the experiencing individual rather than on the cultural setting as observed from a third person viewpoint (p. 347).*

Therefore, we can suggest that priority of my research should focus on the individual's lived experience with the social and cultural contexts as the background. However, it is clearly important to be aware of the existence of social –cultural factors that shape individuals' experiences. In chapter 4, we have suggested that gender is a factor that affects participants shopping and consumption experiences. In Chapter 5, gender is a factor that can affect self concept motivations and self constructions. In Chapter 6, it has been reviewed that gender can be a factor influencing the types of relationships and the dimensions of relationship quality. Thus, we can suggest that gender will be brought in to provide a better description of consumer/store relationship phenomenon. Indeed, consumer research stream termed Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) has accepted that '*gender is a socio-cultural category which refers to the ways that men and women are socialized into male and female roles*' (Catterall, et al, 2006, p. 222). Therefore, we can suggest that in this research, gender will be considered as an important 'social category' that can enhance our understanding of consumers' roles, self identity and meanings and then consumer store interactions.

In order to consider the gender issue, we suggest that the 'feminist' approach will be incorporated in the methodology. However, the feminist approach employed here can be called the '*celebratory feminism*' or '*postfeminist' approach*' (Catterall, et al, 2006, p. 223) which is described as:

> *The reconciliation of feminism and consumption characterizes the postfeminist imaginary, with the remaking of feminism into desires and identities that can be realized through consumption'...the post-feminist reconciliation with, and celebration of, consumer culture, many feminists argue that gender is still an important category* (Catterall et al, 2006, p. 223).

Indeed, by taking the celebratory feminist approach, we can explore how shopping and consumption can be a means for women to achieve their self fulfilment and authenticity. In the mean time, by incorporating the feminist perspective in the existential phenomenological approach, the researcher is aware that the researcher has taken a methodological pluralism approach. As Shankar and Patterson (2001) argue:

> *In upholding a relativistic ontology and constructivist epistemology, methodologically the only tenable position is to concurrently accept methodological pluralism. If we accept that there is no privileged access to a truth then methodological pluralism will enable us to access multiple and possibly competing claims to that truth in multiple ways of collecting data, regardless of whether the data is collected ethnographically or by phenomenological interviewing, for example, will enable us to build up multiple and possibly more holistic representations of the consumption experiences of our participants and collaborator* (p. 490).

Indeed, Shankari and Patterson argued that '*no methodology is perfect; what matters are the insights that may be gained*' (p. 491). Bettany and Woodruffe-Burton (2006) have also analysed the rationale behind methodological pluralism from the researcher's perspective. Indeed, Denzin and Lincoln (1998) have stressed the notion of researcher as *"bricoleur"*. For the researcher, the aim is to provide solutions to problems by using the tools for his or her methodological trade. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) have stated that:

> *the choice of which tools to use, which research practices to employ, is not set in advance.* (p.3). ..."*The combination of multiple methods, empirical material, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood, then as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth and depth to any investigation* (p.4)

The notion of methodological pluralism has further encouraged me to consider what methods to choose in order to gain a more holistic understanding of consumer/store relationship phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher has drawn from a few areas to develop a methodological approach that can best explore participants' experiences and add breadth and depth to the investigation of meanings.

7.10 Stage Four: Phenomenological Process: Hermeneutic Circle and Data Analysis

Heidegger's hermeneutic circle has also been described and applied in Thompson et al (1990). Indeed, at the data analysis stage, the researcher has taken the 'hermeneutic approach' to interpretation of participants' lived shopping and consumption experiences.

Philosophically, as we discussed in 7.3.2), Heidegger always emphasized 'time' in understanding human nature. Indeed, human existence is always marked by 'fore-having', which basically means that humans are already in the world whatever we do or say. In addition, humans can never escape from the 'public reality'- the 'they' (Hermann, 2007). Indeed, for Heidegger, every question has three parts: that which is asked about, that which is interrogated, and that which is to be found out by the asking. In order to find something new (future: which is to be found out), we have to start with something that is already given to us (past: the interrogated). By combining the two, we can get the question as a whole (present: which is asked about) (Hermann, 2007, p.57). Therefore what we have been given by the world is the starting point for new interpretation and understanding. Indeed, Heidegger defines phenomenology as '*the analytic description of intentionality: it's a priori*' (Hermann, 2007, p.41). At the philosophical level, the priori knowledge is important for us to understand and perceive the world.

At the practical level, the hermeneutic rule requires that '*we must understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole...the harmony of all the details with the whole is the criteria of correct understanding*' (Gadamer, 1985, p. 291; Cited by McAuley, 2004, p. 192) In addition, Gadamer (1985) also suggests that there are objective and subjective aspects to this understanding (McAuley, 2004, p.

192). McAuley (2004) illustrates Gadamer's (1985) notions of the hermeneutic method of how to attain the two aspects of understanding. First, the text needs to be read objectively by putting the text back to the 'author's' context and relating the work to the genre and traditions of the culture. Indeed, at a more practical level, Yanow and Schwartz-shea (2006) have also argued that '*concepts can become part of the historical background and can form the context for scholarly thinking*' (p.xvii). Thus, in order to achieve this, the researcher has to be aware of his/her own 'objective' positions. In order to obtain the subjective understanding, the researcher needs consider the text as '*a manifestation of a creative moment, belongs to the whole of its author's inner life*' (Gadamer, 1985, p. 291) (McAuley, 2004, p. 193). Indeed, we can suggest that with a starting point (priori knowledge), the researcher can focus on objective understanding. After the hermeneutic process, interpretation will be modified and we can get closer to participants' subjective understandings. Interpretation is an iterative process. Therefore, this is exactly what the hermeneutic method entails. Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy (1988) described the Hermeneutic circle as:

> *In the Hermeneutic Circle, an interpreter's tentative grasp of the whole text guides an initial reading of its parts. The detailed reading, in turn, leads toward a revision of the original overview. This dialogue between reader and text then proceeds through subsequent iterations of a circular process that, far from being vicious, tends toward its own correction in the direction of increasing validity. Typically, the reader does not report each cycle of this interpretive process. Rather, for purposes of exposition, the reader tends to discuss the final interpretation chosen from among various competing interpretations on the basis of the evidence provided by a close reading of the textual details. Gadamer (1975) has described this self-corrective interpretive process as a "fusion of horizons" that brings the reader's interpretation into closer alignment with the tradition, historical context, social situation, and authorial intention of the text at*

hand (p. 400)

We can see that one of the hermeneutic circles in consumer research is an iterative process of the interaction between the researcher and the researched in the data analysis process.

Indeed, it is suggested that researchers can make use of the *'dual consumer-researcher role*' (Gould, 1995, p. 721) because researchers' pre-understandings, experiences, presuppositions and interests can enhance the process of understanding, which has also been discussed by Arnould and Fischer (1994):

> *The [pre-]understanding of consumer researchers is found in two inter-related traditions–experience as a consumer and experience as a researcher...Philosophical hermeneutics stresses that [pre-]understanding enables rather than constrains the interpreter* (p.57).

However, due to the dual role researchers can play, it has to be aware that researcher can bring his/her concepts, ideas and experiences to the interpretation and understanding process. In addition, researchers' concepts and ideas might affect the interpretation and understanding of participants' subjective experiences and meanings. Thus, it is argued that:

> *(self) reflexivity becomes increasingly fundamental in sensitizing ourselves to our pre-understandings. This suggests to us that before we can ever hope to understand others, we first must understand ourselves" (*Gould, 1995, p. 721; Shankar and Petterson, 2001, p. 492*)*

It has also been argued that '(self)-reflexivity' is crucial in the hermeneutic circle in data analysis.

7.11 Stage Five: Hermeneutic circle and Feminist Approach to Data analysis

We have discussed that the researcher's experiences and theoretical assumptions are important for interpretation. However, it has been argued that researchers can also bring their bias and values into their interpretation. In addition, many theorists have recognised the *'contextually and historically grounded'* nature of understanding (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998). Indeed, feminist researchers have explicitly emphasised the social and construction nature of interpretations:

> *Feminists have had to accept that there is no technique of analysis or methodological logic that can neutralize the social nature of interpretation (*Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994, p. 133; Woodruffe-Burton, 2001, p. 173).

> *Feminists, for example, have argued for over two decades that understanding and knowledge come from being involved in a relationship with our subject matter and respondents, and not through adopting a detached and objective stance; (*Harding, 1992; Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p. 122).

The issues of how to conduct research and gain knowledge have therefore been discussed by feminist researchers. Feminist researchers have emphasized that researchers should listen to participants and understand their lives 'in and on their own terms' (Gilligan, 1982; Oakley, 1990). Instead of avoiding bias and beliefs researchers can bring into their interpretations, feminist researchers confront this by emphasising the importance of reflexivity for conducting research. For example, Mauthner and Doucet (1998) have emphasised that researchers can and should make his/her assumptions, methods and social location explicit through systematic and self conscious analysis *(*Mauthner and Doucet, 1998):

> *Indeed the production of knowledge must contain a systematic examination and explication of our beliefs, biases and social location (Harding, 1992)*; *This reflexivity ensure that the politics underlying the methods, topics, and governing assumptions of our scholarship are analysed directly and self-consciously, rather than remaining unacknowledged (Crawford and Marecek, 1989) (*Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p. 122).

Thus, by doing this:

> *Feminist researchers can only try to explain the grounds on which selective interpretations have been made by making explicit the process of decision – making which produces the interpretation, and the logic of method on which these decisions are made* (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994, p. 133; Cited by Woodruffe-Burton, 2001, p. 173).

Thus, we can summarise the feminist views of reflexivity in conducting research by using Mauthner and Doucet (1998) illustration:

> *Reflexivity means reflecting upon and understanding our own personal, political, and intellectual autobiographies as researchers and making explicit where we are located in relation to our research respondents. Reflexivity also means acknowledging the crucial role we play in creating, interpreting and theorising research (p.121).*

Therefore, a feminist researcher does not attempt to be invisible in the interpretive process by bracketing their assumptions and pre-understandings. However, in this process, the researcher needs to make clear how their understanding, beliefs and assumption can be located and positioned in relation to the respondents' understandings and beliefs.

Holstein and Gubrium (2003) further emphasised that varied subject positions are formed in the interview process. These subject positions also need to be taken into account in the interpretation and data analysis process (p.15). Indeed, one interesting notion is 'voice' which is emphasized especially in feminist research. When we take the new approach to interview described by Holstein and Gubrium (2003), the varied subject positions for the participants and the interviewer in the discourse construction can represent the voices.

> *Empirically, the concept of voice leads us to the question of who-or what subject - speaks over the course of an interview and from what standpoint.... Treating the subject positions and their associated voices seriously, we might find that an ostensibly single interview could actually be, in practice, an interview with*

> *several subjects, whose particular identities may be only partially clear* (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003, p. 22).

The recognition and representation of multiple standpoints and voices are especially important in the data analysis process. Indeed, how to explicitly locate the researcher and the researched and how to allow the multiple voices to be heard and displayed equally has become a challenge in the interpretation process.

Chapter Summary:

This chapter has focused on the researcher's reflexivity for research methodology development. In conclusion, the researcher regards herself as a '*bricoleur*' and therefore combined multiple methods and perspectives. The research methodology has evolved from positivism to interpretive-constructivist approach, from existential phenomenological inquiry to further incorporate the feminist perspective. Indeed, we need to stress that the evolution of the research methodology is the result of the researcher's attempt to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomena.

CHAPTER 8

RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCES

This chapter presents the researcher's reflexive account of the research process. By doing this, the researcher will describe the dilemmas and problems encountered. In addition, solutions to these problematic issues will also be explored. Indeed, the evolution of the research question and research methods has also reflected the development of the researcher from a personal perspective.

8.1 Evolution of Research Questions and Research Methodologies

The research question was initially shaped by the researcher's consultant background that emphasised the prediction and control of consumer behaviour. In addition, positivist research methodology and cognitive perspective in consumer research also affected the formation of original research design. However, the researcher confronted many problematic issues in early research stage. Essentially, the researcher realised that positivistic methodology has inherent problems that could not enhance the understanding of consumer store behaviours. Indeed, under the influence of Fournier's (1998) study, the research question shifted to understanding the meanings of stores for consumers and various kinds of bonds between consumers and their stores. The researcher recognised that the interpretive perspective in consumer research and its associated methodologies could enable her to achieve the research objectives. Indeed, the research aims to obtain a more 'holistic' comprehension of consumer store behaviour and developing a conceptual model for the understanding of consumer/store relationship phenomena.

8.2. Summary of the Research Procedure

In this section, four aspects of the research procedure are discussed: (1) sample selection; (2) interview; (3) data analysis and (4) interpretation. The discussion will focus on the research activities, which can signify application of the philosophical stance and methodological approaches described in Chapter 7.

8.2.1 Sample Selection

The study is based on 10 case studies. Indeed, decision of sample size is based on the following rationales: (1) purposive methods; (2) a tradition of consumer research; (3) the number of consumers' store stories collected.

Firstly, sample size decision is based on the purpose of the research. It has been suggested that sample decisions can be based on purposive methods (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). For example, Thompson (1996) used purposive sampling and selected 7 participants for his hermeneutic-phenomenological research on US working women's hectic life style. Thompson (1996) has set up the criteria for sampling and argued the rationale:

> *These criteria provide a specific set of social circumstances in which to situate the study's findings and hence, respond to calls for a more in-depth and localized accounts of consumption phenomenon (sherry, 1991). Second, this contextualized approach has been advocated as a strategy for deriving theoretical constructs and relationships that are grounded in the social dynamics of everyday life (Strauss and Corbin 1990)* (p. 392).

Indeed, current research aims to gain in-depth understanding of UK women's grocery shopping and consumption experiences and their bonds with stores. Thus, the focus is on understanding and thick description of store meanings, which can be local and contextualised. Indeed, at the outset of the investigation, a list of potential participants was developed from a personal network. The sampling criteria for this research are that each participant is employed, lives in a two-income household, is female and has at least one child. In addition, many scholars in marketing argue that one tradition of consumer research focuses on, '*developing a more in-depth analysis of the life stories expressed by a relatively small number of participants* (Levy 1981; McCracken 1988; Mick and Buhl 1992; Thompson et al. 1990; Thompson, 1996, p. 392). Thompson (1996) has argued that:

> *The purpose of the qualitative interview is not to discover how many, and what kinds of people, share a certain characteristic. It is to gain access to the cultural categories and assumptions according to which one construes the world . . . qualitative research does not survey the terrain, it mines it. It is, in other words, much more intensive than extensive in objectives* (McCracken (1988, p. 17, Cited by Thompson, 1996, p. 392).

The rationale of this approach is particularly relevant to research objectives of current research. Therefore it can be argued that our research can also focus on a small number of participants' shopping experiences.

Fournier (1998) has conducted research on consumer/brand relationships. In this study, Fournier (1998) employed purposive sampling and the sample size was 3. Interviews in this study generated 110 consumer-brand stories. The purposive sample of current research has actually generated nearly 100 consumer-store stories in 10 cases. Indeed, the research has shown that the number of stories collected has enabled the researcher to produce a thick description for the group of participants' shopping experiences. To sum up, it can be argued that the 10 cases have been a sufficient sample size for the researcher to achieve research objectives.

My research also focused on female participants. Indeed, my research investigated female consumer/store relationship phenomena. The rationale for choosing females and not including males at this stage of research can be explained as follows. Firstly, it can be suggested that women deserve to be the subject of knowledge from the post-feminist perspective. Secondly, the review of literature has shown the existence of significant differences between males and females in terms of their perceptions and motivations of shopping and consumption at the socio-cultural level. Therefore, it can be suggested that women can be treated as a unique social-cultural category if we probe the meanings of shopping and consumption. Thirdly, relationship theories have shown that gender differences exist in terms of nature and development of interpersonal relationships. This research aims to explore relationships between consumers and their stores. Thus, it can be suggested that at this stage of research, it is reasonable to focus on the female gender first.

Table 8.1 Participants Information

Name	Occupation	Age	Family
Helen	Student Administrator Full- time student	Early-40s	Husband and two children
Susan	Administrating staff	Late 40s	Husband and one child
Barbara	Part-time Administrating staff	Early 50s	Husband and three children
Clare	Administrating staff	Late 40s	Husband and two children
Lucy	Administrating staff	Late 40s	Husband and two children
Doreen	Administrating staff	Mid-40s	Husband and two children
Beverly	Administrating staff	Mid-40s	Husband and two children
Vera	Retired social worker	Late 50s	Husband and two children (one still staying at home)
Chris	Administrating staff and part-time student	Mid 30s	Husband
Jannie	Administrating staff	Mid 40s	Husband and two children

Note: In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, the researcher will not provide the details of the roles of these participants.

8.2.2 Interview

Interview format in this research evolved from 'existential phenomenological interview' developed by Thompson et al (1989) to 'constructivist-feminist interview'. We have discussed in Chapter 7, Thompson et al (1989)'s existential phenomenological interview emphasized the naturalistic approach to interview. The PhD researcher have taken the stance that in order to explore consumers' experiences in-depth, the researcher and the researched should co-participate in the meaning constructing and re-constructing process. Thus, the researcher decided to take the 'constructivist-feminist interview' format. We are now going to describe the implementation and evolution of interview formats in the research process.

8.2.2.a Existential Phenomenological Interview

At the first stage of fieldwork, the researcher conducted two phenomenological interviews, which adopted the format outlined by Thompson, et al (1989). Indeed, the two interviews were of between one hour and two hour's duration. The interviews were conducted at the participants' place of work and in a quiet no-disturbance environment. The interviews were tape recorded, with the respondents' full agreement, for later transcription. Indeed, in the interview process, the researcher tried to provide a context in which participants could freely describe their experiences in detail. The researcher also attempted to open a dialogue that could lead to an experiential account of consumption experience, without directing the interview or being overly intrusive. Therefore, at the start of the interview, participants were asked how many favourite stores they had. The researcher then asked subsequent questions and comments by following the participants' discourse. The conversation was led by the flow of dialogue and the questions set by participants. In addition, in order to focus on the specific events and generate more detailed descriptions of participants' lived experiences, participants were given some specific shopping and consumption occasions to discuss such as birthday/dinner party, Christmas/Easter, gift, mundane weekly shopping, etc. Indeed, the interview questions were essentially 'what' and 'how questions'. The researcher tried to use respondents' own words when asking the questions. The research also tried to avoid using the 'why' questions.

After the researcher conducted the first interviews, the researcher came across other approaches to interviews. For example, she explored the logical positivism approach to interview. From this perspective, it is argued that there is always data reduction - even at the pre-fieldwork stage. Therefore, interview questions can be designed and interview format can be more structured (Miles and Huberman, 1984). The researcher also investigated the grounded theory's approach to interviews. Indeed, Strauss and Corbin (1998) have suggested that research could start from following a conceptual framework. Then researcher can revise interview questions based on the information gained from initial interviews. Indeed, these approaches to interview share the notion that researchers can possibly start from questions from existing literature and conceptual framework. These questions can then be refined and modified throughout subsequent interviews. Therefore, it is obvious that the PhD researcher faced a first dilemma. On the one hand, the researcher desired to maintain the rigour by remaining to a set of recommended methodological rules (existential phenomenological inquiry). On the other hand, the researcher felt the importance of being more critical about approaches to interview formats.

Although the first interviews went well, one interview experience forced the researcher to reflect even more deeply on interview format issues. One participant in the interview was a well-educated woman and in the interview process she was able to deeply reflect and articulate her experiences. In addition, she kept asking the researcher's opinions of her experiences. This interview experience therefore raised issues that led to more reflections with respect to the role of researcher and the related issues such as the researcher's self–disclosure in the research process (Reinharz, 1992). To sum up, these two dilemmas (relationship between the researcher and the participant and the relationship between the researchers' knowledge and participants' experiences and concepts) forced the researcher to further reflect on interview techniques. Therefore the researcher decided to explore alternative approaches to interview formats.

8.2.2.b Feminist Interview

It has been discussed in Chapter 7 that the existential phenomenological interview format described by Thompson et al (1989) can be categorised as the conventional or naturalistic interview. However, after reflections (discussed in Chapter 7), the researcher decided to incorporate feminist interview methods in the interview process. *The researcher analysed the data from the first interviews.* The method employed was existential phenomenological method described by Thompson et al (1989). Then the researcher spent half a year to analyse the data she gained from the first two participants. The main themes had informed her further interviews. Then the researcher conducted the second round interviews for the first two participants with half a year interval between the two interviews. In the second round interviews for the first two participants, the researcher incorporated feminist interview methods in the interview process. Then the other 8 interviews were conducted after the researcher had analysed the data and identified the main themes from the data gained from the first two participants. Indeed, in the fieldwork, there was an iterative process between the data collection and data analysis. The researcher attempted to analyse the data and used the emergent new themes to guide further interviews. She used the constructive-feminist interview method for the rest of her data collection process by conducting other eight interviews with the other eight participants.

Thus, the researcher no longer attempted to be as 'invisible' as possible (Fontana and Frey, 2000) and made no effort to retain objectivity through detachment or other alternative techniques. Instead, the emphasis of interview was placed on exploring participants' experiences of shopping and consumption through the medium of shared knowledge. In addition, the researcher, if needed, described her shopping and consumption experiences. The researcher regards her role as equal to participants. This can reduce participants' anxiety. In order to achieve this, at the beginning of interviews, she explained that the aim of the interview is to share the participants' experiences and participants are the experts for their own experiences. The researcher also attempted to build trust and empathy with the participants by listening carefully, showing her respect and understanding for participants' experiences. The interviews did not follow any pre-designed questions. However, the themes identified made the researcher be more alert to emergent and new themes. This format worked well. Indeed, in addition to the identification of new themes, issues and themes, which emerged from first-round interviews, were probed in more depth.

More than half of the interviews were conducted in participants' home or the researcher's home in Lancaster. The remaining interviews were held either in the respondents' work place or in the researcher's office. The interviews were conducted in a quite relaxed, friendly and informal manner. The people who took part were offered refreshments. The interviewer began by briefly describing the research project and the conversation started by asking the participants who, in their family, did the grocery shopping. From then on, the dialogue or conversation flowed around the stories accounted by the participants. The researcher also showed empathy (e.g., 'that is really interesting', 'I know what you mean') and encouragement (for example, occasionally, by giving accounts of her own experiences), and for the most part, the researcher attempted to keep the conversation flowing naturally. There was no set list of questions, although the researcher's prior knowledge and awareness of emerging themes from previous interviews did allow her to be aware of certain questions to be asked, or issues to be raised during the course of dialogue. The interviews were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. The interviewees were assured that the researcher took the confidentiality issue seriously. In addition, the researcher gained participants' permission for information in the interview to be used in the writing up of the research on the basis that they can only be identified by an initial or a pseudonym and the briefest biological details (age, sex, occupation, for example).

8.2.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data analysis process has been through three stages: (1) grounded theory approach - used for the first two cases; (2) hermeneutic methods - used for the interviews for the first two cases; and (3) hermeneutic and feminist methods for the ten cases. We are now going to discuss these three stages of data analysis in more detail.

8.2.3.a Grounded Theory Approach

At this stage, it has to be recognised that various methods in grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) had exerted greater influence on the data analysis. In grounded theory, one method to analyse data is through '*theoretical comparison*' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Researcher's experience and knowledge can be used to guide the analysis by (1) helping researcher know what he/she is looking for at the dimensional and the property level and (2) helping researcher to derive new dimensions and properties. Indeed, the new dimensions and properties are grounded in the data, which can provide new understandings of the phenomenon. According to grounded theory, the existing concepts and conceptual framework can play an important role for understanding the data. Indeed, this notion has also been emphasised in the hermeneutic perspective. For example, it has been argued that there is a starting point of understanding of any phenomenon. Following this, there will then be an iterative process and further revision and modification until there is an interpretation close to participants' interpretation (Yanow, 2006).

The researcher used grounded theory to guide the analysis of the transcripts of interviews for the first two participants. Firstly, the coding was conducted at the sentence level. The focus was on the meanings of participants' experiences. The coding was general and not related to theories and concepts. This process had generated open coding and substantive coding. Secondly, we developed an initial list of codes and these codes were derived from concepts and theories (Discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6). The idea of developing the initial coding list is derived from the notion of 'theoretical questioning' stressed in grounded theory. The list of codes had been used to guide the coding and development of themes. This process had generated the organising coding (based on the concepts from the literature or theory) and the theoretical coding (which elevated the open coding to a more theoretical level). In this process, the initial list of codes was modified and refined until all the codes were derived from and grounded in the data. Then the derivation of the coding was completed. In addition, the contact summary for the participants was written in order to have a holistic understanding of what was happening in the data.

By reflecting on this stage of data analysis, the researcher was aware of the problems with respect to the way of conducting the analysis. Indeed, the researcher realised that she was influenced by grounded theory approach too much especially in respect of some concepts (theoretical sensitivity, theoretical comparison, theoretical sampling, etc). At this stage, the researcher could be more open-minded and allow the data to speak. The focus should be on the *PHENOMENON* not the theories and concepts in the literature.

8.2.3.b Hermeneutic Approach

At the second stage of data analysis, the transcripts were analyzed by following the criteria for hermeneutic method. In the analysis process, the text of interview transcripts was treated as an autonomous body of data. Indeed, the individual's descriptions were considered in its own terms. At this stage of data analysis, the researcher has strived to ground the analysis in the data. In the mean time, the researcher also tried to use her knowledge and conceptual framework to guide the analysis. It has to be stressed that the researcher did not follow the 'bracketing' requirements suggested by Thompson, et al (1989, 1990) for conducting existential phenomenological inquiries.

Firstly, the interviews were analysed idiosyncratically. The researcher read the transcriptions and highlighted the interesting parts. The idiosyncratic analysis started with an impressionistic reading of the transcripts in which recurrent behavioural and attitudinal tendencies were identified. The goal of this analysis was a holistic interpretation of what role stores play in the life of the given individual and a holistic interpretation of consumer/store relationships manifested with the life of the respondent. The analysis also aimed to explore the theme or themes that capture similarities in descriptions of the respondent's experiences across the stores (meanings and store relationships) and provide a coherent explanation. Specific store stories are then considered for their manifestations of these themes and a story of consumer/store relationships within the context of the participant experiences emerges.

The second level of interpretation involved an across-person analysis, the aim of which was to discover convergent themes capturing commonalities and patterns in the data across stores and individuals. Through the comparisons, these themes were reduced to more fundamental patterns that constitute the principal emergent themes in the data (Schouten, 1991). Literature on shopping and consumption meanings informed construction of the themes. Interpersonal relationships also informed construction of the themes related to relationships such as: basic relationship descriptors (e.g., length of relationship, frequency of interaction, types of interdependence and type of association); provisions of the relationship (e.g., identity-related, entertainment, supportive); relationship stages (e.g., initiation, growth, deterioration) and relationship bond types (e.g., instrumental, affective, liking versus various forms of love).

8.2.3.c Hermeneutic and Feminist Approach

At this stage, the researcher incorporated feminist perspective in the data analysis process. The researcher has recognised the importance of the researcher's reflexivity for interpretation of the data. Indeed, it is suggested that in the interpretation process, there are a various standpoints intertwiningly and the research process involves a balancing between these standpoints. Indeed, Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) have described these standpoints as:

> *the research process involves a balancing act between three different and conflicting standpoints:(1) the multiple and varying voices of each of the individual we interview; (2) the voice(s) of the researcher(s); and (3) the voice(s) and perspective(s) represented both within existing theories or frameworks in our research areas and which researchers bring to their studies (p.140).*

Indeed, at this stage of analysis, the researcher has conducted: (1) four readings for the ten cases. This analysis is done by the guidance of feminist approach described by

Mauthnre and Douchet (1998) by focusing on the voices and relationships. In addition, the analysis also followed the hermeneutic criteria and method (described in 8.2.3.b).

Firstly, data analysis was conducted on ten cases. The researcher had been aware of the voices and representation issues in the data analysis process. At the idiosyncratic analysis stage, four readings for the ten cases have been conducted. The first reading is focused on the researcher's responses to participants' narratives by linking the researcher's background, experiences and theoretical pre-assumptions and perspectives and the researcher's emotional responses to participants' stories. In addition, the researcher was also immersed in the data and analysing the social, cultural context in relation to the respondents' experiences. In addition, the researcher was also fully aware that it is her voice and her response to the respondents' narratives. Indeed, the researcher has not felt guilty by being visible and speaking her voice. The second reading has focused on the voice of the respondents. The reading concentrated on how the respondents feel and what they experience and how they speak about themselves. By doing this, a space was created for comparing what the respondents' speak about themselves and what the researcher speaks about the respondents' experiences. Indeed, it is stressed that the priority is what the respondents speak of themselves before the researcher speak of them (Brown and Gilligan, 1992, p. 27-8, Cited by Mauthre and Doucet, 1998, p.128). By doing this:

> *This stage of the data analysis represents an attempt to stay, as far as possible, with the respondents' multi-layered voices, views and perspectives rather than simply and quickly slotting their words into either our ways of understanding the world or into the categories of the literature in our area (*Mauthre and Doucet (1998, p.130)

The third reading is focused on the reading for relationships. The research question is consumer/store relationships. The following relationships such as the respondents' interpersonal relationships with partner, relatives, children and friends, strangers, sales people in stores and the relationships between consumers and the groups, the places, etc. These relationships have been explored through the mediation of products and the stores. The fourth reading is focused on respondents' experiences and relationships within the cultural context and social structure.

For each case, the four readings have been conducted idiosyncratically and the case studies can provide the understanding for the depth and complexity of individual experiences. Then across-person analysis was conducted in order to discover the convergent themes, patterns in the data and the differences between respondents' experiences. Indeed, by doing the four readings, we can be clear of the stance of the researcher and the researched (Gilligan et al, 1990; Mauthre and Doucet, 1998). Indeed, it can be argued that the data analysis has incorporated feminist and the hermeneutic method.

8.2.3.d Iteration: Interview and Data Analysis

We have discussed that the hermeneutic method emphasises research as 'iteration' process. The 'iteration' is referred to as '*moving between the interview and data analysis*' (Spiggle, 1994). It has been described as:

> *It permits the development of provisional categories, constructs, and conceptual connections for subsequent exploration. Thus, it aids in induction—developing concepts and constructs from the data. It allows a more unified interpretation of data by encouraging the hermeneutical back and forth between part and whole, thus assisting deduction—refining concepts and drawing out their theoretical implications. Iteration promotes verification as the investigator seeks deliberate refutation of the emerging conceptual scheme from the data, as described below (see Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy's discussion [1988] of interpretation and*

> *falsification)* (Spiggle, 1994, p.495).

Indeed, it can be suggested that the research process can be described as an 'iteration' process required by existential phenomenological inquiry (Thompson, 1990) and also by Spiggle (1994) as a general principle for interpretive research.

Firstly, the iterative process is referred as '*moving through data collection and analysis in such a way that preceding operations shape subsequent ones* (Spiggle, 1994, p. 495). It can be argued that the researcher has applied these principles in the research process. For example, the researcher has gained information from the initial interview and data analysis and the information was used to guide subsequent interviews. Indeed, the emergent themes have also been incorporated into subsequent interviews and these themes have actually shaped the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon.

Secondly, the iteration notion can also be applied to the data analysis process. At the idiosyncratic level of analysis, iteration has been described as:

> *In the analysis of a single interview, the back and forth is between passages in the interview (the part) and the entire interview (the whole). These latter two forms of iteration occur within the data inference phase and necessitate reading and rereading the interviews (see Bergadaa 1990; Hirschman 1992; and Thompson et al. 1990)* (Spiggle, 1994, p. 495).

It can be argued that the researcher has applied this principle in the data analysis. We have discussed the idiosyncratic level of analysis in detail in sections 8.2.3.b and 8.2.3.c. Indeed, at the cross-person level of analysis, the 'iteration' has been described as:

> *reviewing each interview after they developed global themes from analyzing the interviews separately. Here the back-and-forth procedure is between each interview (which is the part) and the entire set of interviews (which is the whole)*

(Spiggle, 1994, p. 495).

It can be argued that the data analysis in this research is an iterative process at the cross-person level and the final analysis. We have described the data analysis in detail in section 8.2.3.b and 8.2.3.c.

Additionally, the researcher acknowledges the importance of multiple interpretations (according to Thompson, et al, 1989). However, the PhD researcher interpreted these interview transcripts by herself only (as fits the pattern of PhD research, in particular). However, it is worth pointing out that in later work by Thompson (Thompson and Haytko, 1997), there was a move away from group interpretations to individual interpretations of the transcripts (Woodruffe-Burton, 2001). Therefore we can suggest that the researcher's individual interpretation of the transcripts can still be acceptable.

8.3 Organization and Structure of the Thesis

As discussed in Chapter 1, due to the volume of empirical data and the widespread literature that informed the research, the researcher had to face a major challenge when organising and structuring the work into a manageable and meaningful form. Thus, the researcher decided to develop a preliminary framework within the thesis (see Chapter 1). It has to be recognised that it is not ideal to use a sequential model to present the construction of a holistic view of consumers' experiences. However, the researcher decided to use a more structured approach to organizing the literature, by relating the literature to research findings and finally working to produce a conceptual framework of consumer/store relationships. However, as illustrated in previous chapters, the researcher has strived to achieve a holistic understanding of consumer store behaviour and experiences. The researcher also rejects the reductionist approach advocated by positivist researchers to social research. Indeed, the researcher has taken the constructivist-interpretive-feminist method for this study. Therefore, the underlying assumption of the research is to construct and reconstruct meanings and experiences (through the interactions between the researcher, the researched, the theories and the phenomenon) rather than to discover or simply mirror reality 'out there' of research subjects. Therefore, the researcher has presented a more holistic view of consumers and their store shopping and consumption experiences. In addition, findings are discussed in two further chapters, which present a small number of cases in greater detail. Thus chapters 13 and 14 present a more in-depth analysis of particular cases.

Chapter Summary:

This chapter has presented a detailed reflexive account of the research procedure. The researcher does not attempt to hide any '*surprises and undoings*' (Gergen and Gergen, 2000, p.1027; Woodruffe-Burton, 2001, p.189). Instead, this reflexive account has made explicit challenges and questions the researcher confronted, which ultimately shaped research design and execution. These can represent the 'Researcher's Voice'.

CHAPTER 9

CONSUMER-STORE RELATIONSHIPS (I)

This chapter aims to present the research findings in respect of consumer/store relationships at the participants' 'lived' experience level. This chapter will discuss the nature of consumer/store relationships by focusing on the following dimensions such as content and quality, interdependence, affective bonds and temporality. Interpersonal relationship theories will be applied to the analysis and interpretation of consumer/store relationships. In addition, the findings and interpretations will be used to elaborate the second stage of the consumer/store relationship model (presented in Chapter 1).

9.1 Relationship as Interactions

Relationships have been defined as a sequence of interactions. Moreover, interactions in relationships are referred to as activities with goals and meanings. Therefore, it can be suggested that consumer/store relationships can be defined as a sequence of interactions between consumers and the stores they shop in. In addition, these interactions entail goals and meanings. Moreover, these interactions can influence consumers' further interactions with stores. We are now going to discuss the findings related to various dimensions of interactions between consumers and stores. These dimensions include (1) content and quality (2) patterns and frequency.

9.1.1 Content and Quality of Interactions

It has been suggested that interactions in relationships can be characterised by content and quality. 'Content' of interactions refers to what relationship partners do together or what they are expected to do in the relationship. The meanings attached to these interactions (in the context it happens) are termed the 'quality' of these interactions (e.g., Hinde, 1979). Indeed, the analysis has revealed that participants react to various attributes in stores such as products and store environments (physical aspects). In addition, participants also interact with other store attributes such as sales staff and other customers (human factors). Moreover, there are also some joint activities between consumers and stores. In addition, it has also been found that consumers also manipulate products and brands/symbols in their lives through consumption. It can be argued that in these processes, consumers can derive multiple meanings (functional, experiential and symbolic/expressive) through these interactions. Indeed, the research has identified various dimensions of store meanings for consumers. These meanings derived from their interactions with stores can be summarised in Table 11.1:

Table 9.1 Interaction Content and Meanings

Quality of Interactions	Content of Interactions						
Store Meanings	**Products**	**Staff**	**Other customers**	**Friends**	**Family**	**Store environment**	**Joint activities**
Functional	+	+			+	+	+
Hedonic	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Expressive	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

9.1.2 Relative Frequency and Pattern of Interactions

The analysis has revealed that participants have a set of grocery stores in which they do their grocery shopping. Here the set of stores that consumers shop in is termed 'store constellation'. Indeed, participants' store constellations have provided insights into the frequency and patterns of consumer store interactions. For example, Susan described her grocery-shopping patterns:

We get it (Groceries) from a variety of places: from Sainsbury's, from the

> *market and from ASDA sometimes, a few things from M&S, something special.*
>
> *I cannot say which is my favourite but the one I go to most is Sainsbury's. Sometimes we get things from the donuts shop...we get bagels and bread from there...Sometimes we get some stuff from the market... a Greek stall in the market, selling olives and different things like that..*
>
> *(From M&S) I get Yogurts, the Greek, natural Greek yogurts. I find it tastes better than the yogurt from Sainsbury's and sometimes we get bread from there and they have different kinds of bread. We don't get a lot from there.*
>
> *I don't know what I buy from ASDA, not a lot. Things like maybe milk, bread, staples that run out because we don't live very far from ASDA. So if I need milk and bread, you know, or because they open very late and they open all the time. You know you need something and it is late and then you go there and get it. But he (her husband) is most likely to go to Sainsbury's because Sainsbury's has a better selection.*

From Susan's description of her shopping experiences, it can be suggested that Susan visits Sainsbury's most frequently for the convenience reasons. The convenience factors Susan stresses are wide range of product variety and selections. Susan visits some other stores (such as the donuts shop, the Greek stall and M&S) only when she needs to get some special products. Clearly she visits these stores less frequently. In addition, Susan goes to ASDA for emergencies. In fact, visiting ASDA is only because of convenience factors (such as the opening times and the location). Susan's experiences reflect the importance of functional values of store attributes. In addition, these stores are complementary to each other in terms of functional values. Indeed, these stores work together as a whole system to meet her needs on different shopping and consumption occasions. These occasions include: 'mundane'; 'special consumption occasions' and 'emergencies'.

In addition to functional values, Susan's shopping experiences in various stores can reflect her purpose of seeking expressive values:

Sometimes we shop in Booths. Sometimes we go there if we want something special. They have a good selection of things. You won't find at other stores.

I like M&S best. ...I find they have good quality. I've never bought anything from them, which I think is tasteless. I find you can get maybe some special things there, some kind of coffee or some kind of bread.

From Susan's experiences, we can suggest that Susan likes to buy special things and try different things. It is one of her dispositions associated with her life role with respect to food consumption and shopping. Indeed, it can be suggested that for Susan, visiting different stores and purchasing different products can be a way of experiencing (discovering) her 'self' in the shopping context. In addition to this disposition, Susan also described how she experiences/discovers her 'possible selves' by shopping in these stores:

I would say Booths is probably more upscale, smaller with some more luxurious items, more expensive items. Sainsbury's is less special. In Booths, I feel things are overpriced, you know. Sainsbury's, the basics, you know supermarkets.

Sometimes I think 'oh Gosh. A lot of people look like old age pensioners and senior citizens, how can they afford to buy...?'... I always think that how people can buy their weekly shopping in Booths. Gosh, how do they afford it?

From Susan's description, we can suggest that Susan goes to Sainsbury's for her routine shopping. However, she goes to Booths and M&S for more luxurious items and to buy 'something special'. Therefore, we can suggest that the products that she gets from Sainsbury's can represent her actual self and products in Booths can represent her desired self. In addition, the products from M&S can represent her possible self ('hoped for' self). Indeed, we can suggest that products in different stores can represent consumers' different aspects of self concept. The analysis has suggested that various aspects of self concept include the actual self, the desired self and the possible self. Hence, Susan's shopping experiences reveals that expressive values derived from her interactions with these stores can support her self concept construction and maintenance in store contexts. Indeed, it can be suggested that products can link the shopping phase and consumption stage. Products and brands/symbols can also be the means for consumers to display/express various aspects of personal, relational and collective self concept. In addition, due to the requirements for expressive needs on different consumption occasions, participants have a set of store constellations. Indeed, in addition to the complementary functional values, stores in the constellation are complementary in terms of expressive meanings for consumers' various aspects and the multiple levels of their self concept.

The analysis has demonstrated that consumers can derive pleasure in grocery shopping. However, it needs to be stressed that in some stores, consumers' shopping motivation is associated more with 'work' mentality, whereas in other stores, consumers' goals are more linked to 'leisure' seeking. Thus, it can be suggested that consumers have to conduct grocery shopping as tasks but in the mean time, consumers also strive to get some enjoyment. Therefore, consumers' store constellations can represent a combination of hedonic meanings.

The analysis has also revealed that the pattern of interactions can be composed of mundane shopping, special occasions shopping and emergency shopping. For example, Vera has described her interactions patterns with supermarkets and the frequency of the interactions:

> *Booths, I regularly shop there. I will say on average every ten days. In between my other shopping habits is the SPAR. We have a local SPAR. So sometimes if we are busy going away, eating out more or takeaways, which I do now, because you know my family are more grown-up. Then it is not a huge shop, I just get what is called the staple food, bread, milk, eggs. I will go to SPAR and get a bit. The meat, fish and major items I get from Booths. When it is special*

> *holiday, like Christmas, Easter or for entertaining, sometimes, for some things special I go to Sainsbury's. Sainsbury's does patisserie, which I like. I often do a dinner where I do the dinner starter, main course. I get the patisserie from Sainsbury's. It is just easier... I can make these ...but not now. I cheat (Laughter).*

From Vera's shopping experiences, it can be suggested that her shopping patterns have been relatively stable. Vera, on average, visits Booths every ten days. The visiting frequency ('absolute') is high. However, Vera only visits Sainsbury's for special occasions. This indicates that when she needs something special, she always goes to Sainsbury's. Indeed, the relative frequency is nearly 100%. Therefore, when we consider visiting frequency (interaction), both absolute and relative frequency should be considered and meanings of these visits should also be taken into account.

To sum up, store constellation can indicate that consumers have a set of stores and these stores work as a system to: (1) represent the combinations of functional values of stores (complementary) that meet consumers' functional needs in respect of shopping and consumption (2) reflect the combinations of expressive values (complementary) associated with these stores (3) signify the combinations of hedonic meanings (complementary). Indeed, these functions can work together to support consumers' life role tasks fulfilment and pleasure seeking motivations and expressive needs. In addition, relative and absolute frequencies and meanings associated with interactions should be taken into account in order to understand the interactions' effect on the relationship nature between consumers and stores.

9.2 Relationship as Interdependence

Relationships can be defined as interdependence (Kelley, et al, 1983). Indeed, it has been suggested that there are two inter-related levels of interdependence (1) the given level and (2) the dispositional level (Kelley, 1986). The themes that emerged from the data show that at the given level, there are two types of interdependence – we call them 'functional' and 'experiential' interdependence. At the dispositional level, there is one type of interdependence - we call this 'expressive' interdependence.

9.2.1 Functional Interdependence

Our data analysis showed that stores could provide various functional supports for participants to conduct their grocery shopping. We also suggest that participants can depend on functional attributes of stores to conduct their grocery shopping tasks. Therefore, the type of interdependence relating to these functional attributes can be termed 'functional interdependence'. For example, Helen's experiences have shown how much she depends on the functional attributes of supermarkets to conduct her grocery shopping. In addition, Helen also described how she has to swap between stores to make use of these functional attributes, in order to cope with grocery shopping tasks under various external constraints:

> *I have three favourite shops. I have TESCO, ASDA and Morrison's. I swap between them.*
>
> *I live in Morecombe. My daughters dance at the ...school. I find it convenient when they dance...I go to TESCO at Carnforth. I buy all my weekly food and everything we need for the week. I try not to forget anything. So I don't need to shop anywhere else because it saves time. ...I don't need to go anywhere else.*
>
> *They are not dancing there anymore. ...I would have done that in TESCO because I don't go out that way to Carnforth anymore. I go to, sometimes I go to Morrison's and sometimes I go to ASDA but mainly to Morrison's.*
>
> *When the girls go to dance in vacation times, I would go to TESCO, but mainly to the nearest supermarkets, which would be Morrison's or ASDA, which is the nearest, for the convenience factor, although TESCO is my favourite.*
>
> *I don't like Morrison's. Vegetables are not as good. ... But it is the convenience factor. Now my circumstances have changed and I am studying now. I don't have the time to travel.*

> *Now my shopping pattern has to change. I don't have a set day any more. Until I know, I think I'll go and shop in the late evenings. I know ASDA will be open and it is open 24 hours. If I have to go shopping in the evenings I am more likely go to ASDA because Morrison's closes at 8 and I am sort of under pressure...*

Indeed, from Helen's description, we can suggest that Helen has to conduct her one-stop weekly shopping. In order to achieve this, Helen has to shop in big supermarkets for a wider variety of products. In addition, due to time constraints, she has to juggle between other tasks and her grocery shopping tasks. For example, in order to save time, she has to shop in the nearest store (Morrison's). Indeed, sometimes, she has to shop in the evenings in ASDA (it is open 24 hours). Clearly, Helen has to rely on the functional attributes of different stores to conduct her grocery shopping tasks under many constraints caused by her hectic life style. However, it is clear that functional interdependence are caused by external factors and imposed by external constraints. Therefore, for Helen, functional interdependence is 'being imposed'. Indeed, Helen has vividly expressed the imposed nature of her functional interdependence on ASDA:

> *I probably, for convenience, I have to use ASDA...I can get things, clothes for children. School clothes are easy to find and are decent quality too. I will go. If TESCO's carries clothes, I will forget them all (Laughter).*

In addition, from participants' experiences, we can suggest that functional support can be obtained from a lot of supermarkets. For example, Helen can get functional support from all the supermarkets in which she shops. Therefore, we can suggest that another nature of functional interdependence is 'being general/universal'.

9.2.2 Experiential Interdependence

In addition to conducting tasks ('work'), participants also strive to get some pleasures from grocery shopping. The analysis has revealed that supermarkets can assist consumers to enjoy grocery shopping. In other words, consumers have to rely on the supports provided by supermarkets to obtain different types of shopping pleasures. We can term this kind of interdependence 'experiential/hedonic interdependence'. Indeed, it has also been discussed that supermarkets can enhance consumers' various hedonic experiences. The hedonic experiences identified include: personalising; sensory stimulation; familiarity and control; and value shopping. These experiences can be generated through interactions between consumers and store attributes (staff, store environment and products). Indeed, stores can make consumers feel personal by expressing their care and concern for participants through: (1) staff's personal service and (2) the recognition between consumers and staff. Indeed, the personalising experiences can further bring about emotional connections between consumers and staff and subsequently between consumers and stores. For example, Vera talked about the connections that have developed between her and the staff in Booths and Sainsbury's:

> *You are right. In Sainsbury's on the fish side, there is a nice chap from the South. Again he is good and he is a very pleasant person and he makes you feel good. I always have a chat with him and I like him. Then at Booths, I know the lady behind the cheese counter. I know her personally and we always have a chat. And the lady on the checkout I worked with years ago and we chat. Yes, there are certain people that you sort of know an extra bit. They treat you more than just the job. They have got customer skills. They are very nice.*
>
> *So the supermarkets have sort of got to do a bit more. When they have the special fish and cheese counters, there are somebody who can really go to the extra mile you know.*

We can see that from her description, Vera feels that she knows the staff. Indeed, she feels that staff is 'personal' to her. In addition, the analysis has revealed that what is fundamental for consumers' 'personal' feeling and their 'personalizing' shopping experiences is how stores can really demonstrate that they are concerned about customers' interests. For example, Barbara described how she perceives Sainsbury's conduct:

> *This year, they have made all the aisles higher and longer and I feel all closed in close now... They all try to get as much into the space as they can and to sell you as much as they can. I don't like it as much since they did the new layout. You know, right the way down and higher and higher shelves. I don't like it. Obviously they do need to get more stocks in it but it puts me off really.*

From Barbara's experiences, we can suggest that Barbara does not like the high shelves. Sainsbury's have made the aisles longer and the shelves higher. For Barbara, the motivation underlying these changes of Sainsbury's store layout is to put as much stock in the store without caring about consumers' feelings and needs. However, Barbara has a different perception of Booths:

> *I think they are struggling because they've got a limited amount of space. I have been in the Booths' shops in Kendal and I think they have more room there. I think if they have space it would be better. But I think they make the most of the space they've got. It is the best you get. It is a small shop and you get the best and the cheapest selection of bottled beers. I am most impressed with this.*

From the perspective of attribution theory, we can see that for Barbara, Booths is a shop that makes an effort to serve consumers' interests instead of just putting more stock in for their own interest. Hence, she feels that Booths is personal for her. She described Booths as '*our local shop*'.

Indeed, familiarity and sense of control can also be another source of enjoyment for consumers in supermarkets. Value shopping is also another type of pleasure associated with shopping. Therefore, it can be suggested that stores can focus on store layout and the provision of some bargains in order to generate experiential interdependence between consumers and stores.

To sum up, we can suggest that stores and participants can develop experiential interdependence. In addition, consumers can gain hedonic experiences in specific stores. Therefore, it can be suggested that experiential interdependences are more 'particular' than 'functional' interdependence. The experiential interdependence depends on the match between consumers' taste and the retailer's store design; the efforts stores make for consumers. Indeed, participants can be aware of supermarkets' intentions (positive or negative). They do appreciate supermarkets' efforts for consumers. In addition, participants are more voluntary (instead of being imposed externally) in respect of the development this type of interdependence.

9.2.3 Expressive Interdependence

In addition to 'work' and 'fun', participants can derive 'expressive' meanings for the construction and maintenance of their self concept (personal, relational and collective levels) through interactions with stores. In addition, the notions that retailers' can act as 'cultural intermediary' and consumers and stores can co-create the symbolic and expressive space for consumers have been discussed in Chapter 4. Indeed, it has been argued that there is a dialectical relationship between supermarkets and consumers in terms of interpretation/investment of meanings of store attributes (store environment, products, store activities and even store customers) (discussed in Chapter 4). Therefore, we can suggest that relationships between consumers and stores are interdependent in terms of symbolic and expressive outcomes (participants' self concept construction and maintenance). We have termed this type of interdependence as 'expressive' interdependence.

We have explored - empirically - the views that participants can derive symbolic and expressive meanings from their experiences and interactions with store attributes. Indeed, these attributes can become resources, which can: 1) be used as symbols to represent their self concept and 2) allow participants to discover their self concept and achieve 'self fulfilment'. For example, it has been discussed that consumers can extend their self concept to stores and can develop positive feelings and emotional attachment to stores. Indeed, consumers can have control over stores through their knowing the stores for their own use. Consumers can express their internalised values, beliefs in order to express their social positions and social identities. Indeed, supermarkets can provide products for consumers to communicate their values and beliefs, which can be shared by specific group of consumers. By store and product choices, consumers can express their values and beliefs and thus manifest their extant self and gain group identity (which can bring about group affiliation and sense of belonging and acceptance). In addition, consumers can experience their self concept through their reactions to store environments. Consumers can discover their spiritual self (their moral concerns for animal welfare, their concern about the environment and their love for their family). In addition, stores can provide support for consumers' 'expressive' needs through the design of the store and provision of products and retailer conducts (such as engagement in Corporate Social Responsibility Programmes) (see discussion in Chapter 4 'retailer role' section). Indeed, through interactions, participants and stores can support each other with regard to personality, attitudes and beliefs. In addition, the analysis has shown that 'expressive' interdependences can generate a sense of belonging, intimacy, comfort and safety. Indeed, these interdependences can be more particular and voluntary than functional and experiential interdependences. Figure 9.1 summarises features of three types of interdependences in respect of dependability, particularism and voluntary.

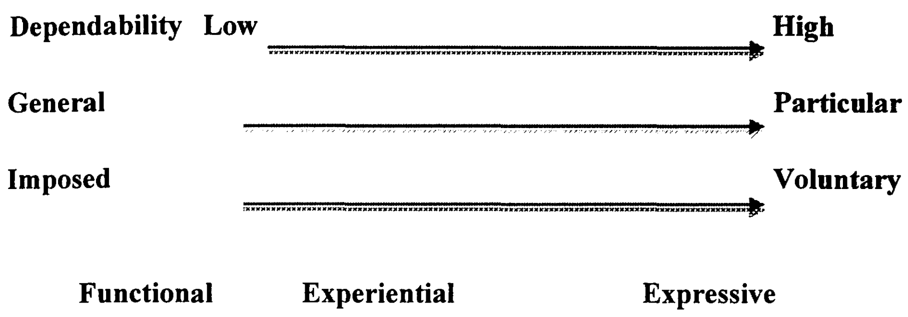


Figure 9.1: Interdependence between Stores and Consumer

9.3 Relationship as Affective Bonds

As discussed in Section 9.2, we suggest that three types of interdependences can be developed between stores and participants. The analysis has shown that interdependences can further generate bonds between consumer and stores. These bonds vary from task-based to more emotion-oriented. For example, Helen described the services offered across supermarkets:

> *I find they are all pretty good if you want to exchange something or something is wrong with the receipt. You can go to customer services. That has not happened much maybe once or twice. Even if your yogurt or milk has burst and leaked everywhere, Morrison's are very good they will exchange and are very helpful in exchanging things. I think ASDA is the same...*

From Helen's shopping experiences, we can suggest that three stores (ASDA, TESCO and Morrison's) share basic functional attributes with respect to generic services. Moreover, Susan also described some of the services across supermarkets:

> *Last time I wanted something different from Sainsbury's and I wanted to buy a particular cake at Easter time. They did not have one and when I called them up and they got one for me specially. They got that from another store. That was good. ...They encouraged you to go back.... I feel very pleased and satisfied. That was good customer service.... Sometimes if I want to get something I will telephone them and find out rather than go and have a look... anywhere they will do it for you on the telephone...*

Clearly, good service and good functional support can give customer satisfaction. As we discussed in Section 9.2, functional interdependences are derived from participants' dependence with respect to more direct and concrete outcomes (such as information and services) of their interactions with stores. Therefore, we can suggest that this kind of interdependence is 'general/generic' in terms of relationship partners. Indeed, consumers can develop functional interdependence with many stores. Thus, functional interdependence derived from these generic services can also be described as 'generic' in nature. In addition, as discussed in 9.2.1, functional supports are important for participants to fulfil their life role tasks. Therefore it can be suggested that functional interdependence can generate functional-bonds. Indeed, we can suggest that the participants' description of their feelings indicates 'evaluation' and 'objective judgment'. In addition, positive evaluation can generate 'satisfaction' (Susan's experience in Sainsbury's) and make consumers 'feel pleased'. Moreover, in terms of the affective nature of functional (task-oriented) bonds, evaluating is associated more with 'liking' rather than with intense emotional experiences. In addition to functional interdependence, the analysis has revealed that other types of interdependence (such as experiential and expressive) can generate more intensive emotional experiences. Positive emotional experiences can further generate 'affective bonds' (also referred to as love). The affective bonds will be discussed in Chapter 10.

9.4 Uniplex and Multiplex Relationships

As discussed in Chapter 6, content and quality (meanings) of interactions can be used to distinguish types of relationships. It has been argued that if there is only one type of interaction in a relationship, the relationship can be defined as 'Uniplex', whereas, if there are many types of interactions in a relationship, the relationship can be termed 'multiplex' (Hinde, 1979; Fournier, 1998). Indeed, it has been also suggested that types of relationship can be differentiated by the quality (meanings) of interactions. Hence, if there is only one meaning attached to relationship interactions, the relationship can be referred to as 'Uniplex'. If more than one meaning is attached to relationship interactions, these relationships can be termed as multiplex (Fournier, 1998). From the analysis of participants' experiences, we have identified three types of relationships: (1) Uniplex (Type A) and (2) Multiplex (Type B and Type C).

9.4.1 Uniplex and Type A Relationship

As described in 9.1 and summarised in Table 9.1, it can be suggested that participants interact with various dimensions/attributes of stores. However, we stress here that only when these interactions are associated with goals and meanings can these interactions be qualified as interactions in a relationship. For example, consumers might go to a store only to purchase products. Therefore, the meaning of their interactions with stores is purely functional (purchasing the products). Therefore, we can argue that there is only one meaning attached to interactions between consumers and stores. Indeed, we can suggest that this type of relationship is 'Uniplex'. We termed this type of relationship 'Type A'. For example, Susan talked about her shopping experiences in ASDA:

> *To be honest with you, last year, probably I have been to ASDA twice and always at night... I will go to ASDA for convenience. For example, if I have to go to a meeting in Carlisle or Ambleside the next day, I just go to get a sandwich or something. So I shop at ASDA on my way home at night after ten o'clock and buy that sandwich. And last time I went there when I was looking for something to do with the cooking I was going to do after mid-night....I like to go there after ten and there is nobody there. Get what you want, pay for it and go.*

Susan goes to ASDA late at night with primarily one purpose –'getting some products'. In addition, her description revealed that functional meanings (such as convenience) are the only meanings she had derived from her interactions with the store. Therefore, we suggest that relationship between Susan and ASDA is 'uniplex'. In addition, Helen has also described her shopping experiences in ASDA and Morrison's. Helen goes to ASDA or Morrison's quite frequently. Indeed, she only goes to these stores because she has no other choices when she is under various constraints on her grocery shopping. Indeed, from Helen's experiences, we can suggest that Helen shops in Morrison's and ASDA primarily for functional reasons. Therefore, we can see that Helen's relationships with ASDA and Morrison's are also Uniplex and Type A relationship.

9.4.2 Multiplex and Type B Relationship

In addition to functional values, interactions between consumers and stores can generate hedonic meanings. The analysis has revealed that participants can develop relationships with stores based on both functional and hedonic meanings associated with their interactions with stores.

The analysis has shown that interactions between consumers and non-human store attributes can be resources for participants' hedonic shopping experiences. For example, interactions between consumers and products can generate pleasures for participants in supermarkets. These pleasures include: 'role playing'; 'sensory stimulation' and 'value shopping'. Moreover, interactions between consumers and store layout and presentations can also bring about some enjoyment for participants (such as familiarity and control). In addition to interactions between non-human store objects and consumers, interactions between participants and people in stores (sales staff, other customers, friends and families) can be another resource for consumers' shopping pleasures. For example, we have discussed that 'personalising' and 'social shopping' are other kinds of enjoyment, which participants have derived from grocery shopping experiences. Indeed, staff can be the source of social support/personalizing, which can lead to emotional connections between participants and stores. In addition, other customers are also a source of social support. Through non-verbal communications between customers in stores, consumers can have sense of safety, intimacy and family feelings. Interactions with friends can be another source for social supports, which participants can experience in stores. Indeed, from participants' experiences, we can see that there are communications between consumers and their friends in the stores. For participants, it is a social thing, a 'bonus' for their mundane shopping. Moreover, shopping with family can be seen as 'social shopping' –'socializing and bonding' between family and friends.

To summarise, the analysis revealed that participants develop relationships with stores based on functional and hedonic meanings derived from their interactions with stores. This is the second type of relationship that emerged from the data. We term this type of relationship as Multiplex and 'Type B' relationship.

9.4.3 Multiplex and Type C Relationship

The interviews have shown that, in addition to functional and hedonic meanings, participants can derive expressive meanings for their self-concept through their interactions with store environment, products and people. These meanings can enhance development of relationships between consumers and the store. We can term this Multiplex relationship as 'Type C' relationship.

We have discussed that participants interact with various elements (non-human and human factors) in stores and consumption phases. At the individual level, through interactions with store environments and products, participants can regard the store and the products as their 'extended self'. Through these interactions, participants can also: (1) connect with their inner/spiritual self; (2) discover/experience their tastes; (3) display their social positions (values and beliefs); (4) express their role-related dispositions (being thrifty); and (5) pursue possible selves (hoped for self and past self). Therefore we can suggest that participants can discover, construct and maintain various aspects of their self concept through their interactions with non-human elements in stores. Additionally, participants also interact with people (staff and other customers) in the stores. Indeed, through these interactions, participants can (1) display their 'presenting'/public self and (2) develop and confirm their 'phenomenal self'. Moreover, at group level, the analysis has shown that participants can form stereotypical impressions of customers in these stores. In addition, they can develop their sense of their collective level of self concept through their self-categorisation with in-group and out-group customers. The self-categorisation process can be affected by their interactions with other customers and their perceptions of these customers (dress, status, age and the shared values). Indeed, participants can identify with customers who share similar qualities and characteristics. Moreover, identification can generate a sense of safety and belonging. In addition, at the relational level, products/brands can be used as symbols to communicate their relational self and family identity and deal with the presenting self required by special consumption occasions. Through the conduct of their life role tasks, participants can display their love for and demonstrate their shared values and preference with their significant others. To sum up, these meanings participants derived for their self concept can enhance the establishment and development of relationships between consumers and their stores. We term this type of relationship Type C consumer/store relationships.

In Table 9.2 we summarized three types of relationships in terms of meanings, content of interactions and content and type of interdependences. We also associate these types of relationships with relationship quality.

Table 9.2 Types of Relationships

Type of Relationships	Meanings of interactions	Content of interactions	Quality of interactions	Types of interdependence	Affective bonds and relationship quality
Type (A)	Functional	Interactions between participants, products, the store environment	The concrete outcomes of service	Functional	Attraction, interdependence commitment
Type (B)	Functional Hedonic	Interactions between participants, products, store environments, other customers, staff, friends, family	Concrete outcomes, service, pleasure, enjoyment, acceptance and safety	Functional and Experiential	Affiliation, intimacy commitment, interdependence
Type (C)	Functional, hedonic expressive	Interactions between participants and products, store environments, staff, other customers, joint activities, and family and friends	Concrete outcomes, service, pleasure, acceptance, safety, belonging, love,	Functional, Experiential Expressive	Intimacy Interdependence Love, commitment trust

9.5 Temporality of Relationships

As discussed in Chapter 6, the temporal nature of relationships has been termed 'temporality' (Hinde, 1979: Fournier, 1994; 1998; Berscheid, 2004). Indeed, it has been suggested that temporality of relationships can be manifested through the continuity, content and pattern of interactions (Hinde, 1979). Moreover, temporality can also be revealed through types of interdependences, the nature of affective bonds and evolution process of these affective bonds (Fournier, 1994; Berscheid, 2004). These features of the temporality of relationships have been revealed in participants' experiences. We are now going to discuss the findings related to the temporality of consumer/store relationships by exploring forms of relationships and evolution of affective bonds.

9.5.1 Temporality and Forms of Relationships

The analysis has shown that consumer/store relationships can be established at the level of consumers lived shopping and consumption experiences. We can argue for the validity of the analysis of consumer/store relationships at the level of lived experiences (Fournier, 1998). Moreover, in order to illustrate the temporality of consumer/store relationships, the analysis moves to cross-case level in terms of theoretical specification of consumer/store relationship domain. Indeed, from the data analysis, we have identified six prominent dimensions characterising consumer/store relationships. These dimensions have also been explored by Fournier's (1998) study of consumer-brand relationships. These categories include: *voluntary (deliberately chosen) versus imposed; positive versus negative; intense versus superficial (casual); enduring (long term) versus short-term; task-related versus personal; and symmetric versus asymmetric* (Fournier, 1998, p.361). Indeed, it can be suggested that these dimensions can broaden the scope of our inquiries of consumer/store relationships. These dimensions can be used to describe the form of relationships.

The analysis has revealed that seven meaningful relationship forms have merged from a joint consideration of relationship dimensions identified above. In order to describe the forms of consumer/store relationships, we have used the forms of interpersonal relationships. Fournier (1998) took this approach for her consumer/brand relationship study. We argue that the rationales of this approach are: (1) abstract dimensions of relationship quality are generic for different types of relationships (interpersonal, consumer/brand and consumer/store). Fournier's (1998) findings have confirmed this proposition and (2) using human relationships as metaphors can make it easy to grasp the features and quality of different forms of relationships between consumers and stores. Indeed, Fournier's (1998) consumer/brand relationship typology has demonstrated this notion. Therefore, in Table 11.3, we have described metaphoric forms, definitions and the case examples of various forms of relationships between consumers and their stores.

Table 9.3 Typology of Consumer/Store Relationships (Adapted from Fournier, 1998)

Relationship form	Definition	Case examples
Kinships	Non-voluntary relationship with family ties.	Clare's relationship with ASDA. It is the store in which she has been shopping with her parents and brother for more than twenty years. She has been shopping with her Mum and her brother every week.
Childhood friendships	Voluntary relationship. Frequently engaged, affective relationship and indicative of earlier life times. Gives comfort, security and personal recognition.	Clare's relationship with some corner shops. These stores can be personal for her. She enjoys the friendship between her and the staff. She can recall her past times (a little girl, and her school time, her parents).
Casual friends	Infrequently visiting. Low in affect and intimacy (with either functional and/or hedonic interdependence).	Clare and ALDI. She goes there every few months to pick up some special/different things because of her boredom with the routine shopping in ASDA. Susan and ASDA. She goes there only for emergencies.
Marriages of convenience	Long-term committed relationship due to external influence versus deliberate choice, and characterised by satisfaction.	Helen and ASDA, Morrison's. These stores can support her to conduct her grocery shopping tasks. Indeed, she has no choice because of her life circumstances. Her shopping in these stores is imposed by external constraints. She is committed to these stores and has shopped in these stores for more than ten years.
Committed partnerships	Long-term, voluntary, socially supported relationship. High in love, intimacy, trust and a commitment to stay together irrespective of the adverse circumstances.	Helen and TESCO. She can get the functional support for her task-related role. She can share the values and beliefs with the store. She can be her actual self and be with type of customers (actual social group). She can trust TESCO and she feels love and intimacy. Her family and friends love TESCO. She has

		commitment. Due to her changed circumstances, she showed her commitment to TESCO by doing on-line shopping through TESCO.
Best friends	Voluntary relationship based on the reciprocity principle. The endurance of the relationship is through the continued provision of the functional, hedonic and dispositional support and positive rewards. Featured by the revelation of the true self, honesty, and intimacy. There is congruity between the self image and the store image in terms of the different representations of self and identity.	Vera's relationship with Sainsbury's and Booths. The reciprocity reward is the key for the endurance of such relationships. Doreen's relationship with Sainsbury's and Booths.
Compartmentalised friendship	Highly situation-confined enduring friendship with lower intimacy than other types of friendship but with higher socio-emotional rewards and interdependence.	Clare's relationship with M&S. She goes shopping in M&S on special occasions. She can feel aspiration through purchasing in M&S. It represents her possible self and the aspirational reference group. She can express her love and care for her family and friends by buying special things from M&S.

The definitions for various forms of consumer/store relationships have developed and been modified from Fournier's (1998) definitions for consumer/brand relationships. However, the researcher has to emphasise that these types of consumer store relationships have derived from the empirical data and they possess their features and nature. In addition, we can see that relationship forms identified in this research are all positive and task-related. No dark-side relationships have been revealed in this research.

9.5.2 Temporality and Evolution of Affective Bonds

One aspect of the temporality of relationships can be revealed through exploring the evolution process of affective bonds (Fournier, 1994; Berscheid, 2004). The analysis has shown that different types of relationships have different developmental paths. Figure 9.1 has depicted three types of relationships. The blue line represents the Type

A relationship, the orange and red lines represent Type B and Type C relationships respectively (discussed in section 9.4).

From Figure 9.2, we can see that the Horizontal axis represents developmental stages of consumer/store relationships. Our focus is on the 'initiation, developing and maintaining' stages. The vertical axis represents features and quality of relationships associated with developmental stages of the relationships. For example, we can see that 'attraction, 'functional interdependence' and external-imposed ('exogenous') commitment are features representing Type A relationship. We can see that there was an evolution process of these dimensions of relationship quality. Indeed, for Type B relationship, in addition to the dimensions of quality of relationship featuring Type A relationship, the following features ('affiliation', 'intimacy', 'experiential interdependence' and more intrinsically oriented (endogenous) commitment also characterise Type B relationship. What needs to be stressed is that the dimensions of relationship quality evolve with the development of relationships. Moreover, we can see that Type C relationship can evolve through Type A and Type B relationships. Type C relationships are ultimately characterised by: love; trust; multiple levels of interdependences and high commitment. In addition, we can suggest that affective quality associated with the developmental stages of relationships can reflect the temporality nature of relationships.

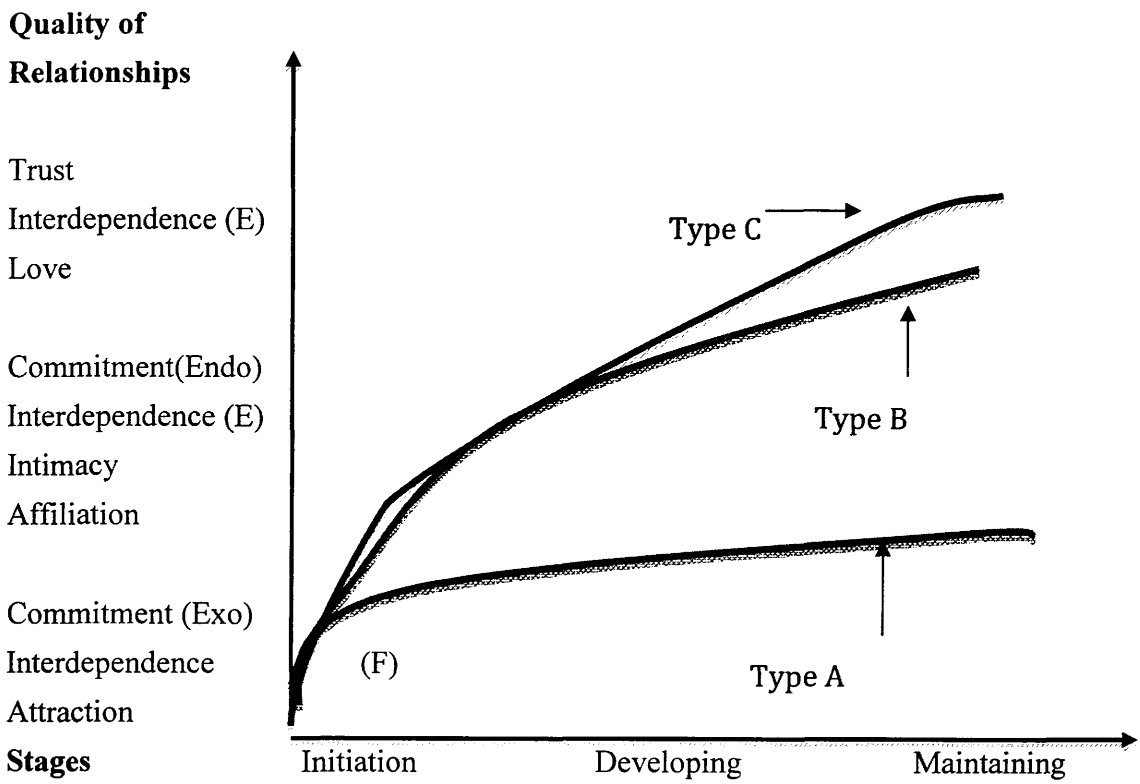
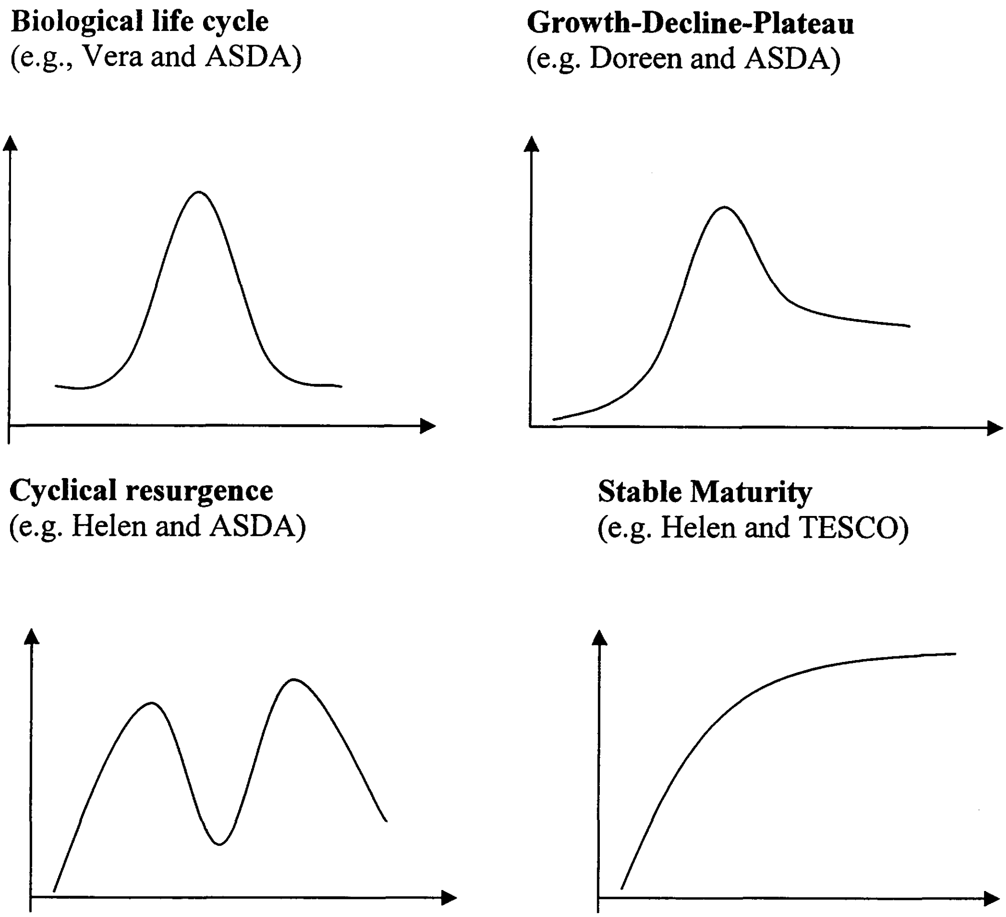


Figure 9.2 Developmental Stages, Affective Bonds and Types of Relationships

9.5.3 Temporality and Relationship Trajectories

One theme that emerged is that most of consumer/store relationships have been featured as the 'Stable Maturity', which has been identified in brand relationship development trajectories (Fournier, 1998, p.364). However, the development paths of consumer/store relationships have not revealed the diversity of these trajectories, which have been depicted for consumer/brand relationships (Fournier, 1998). Most of consumer/store relationships in current research reached maturity at different levels of closeness. In addition, this level of closeness can last a long period of time. Indeed, four types of developmental trajectories have represented consumer/store relationship developmental patterns identified in the research.



Note-Time on X-axis; Relationship quality (Closeness) on Y-axis

Figure 9.3 Developmental Paths of Consumer-Store Relationships (Adopted from Fournier (1998))

9.6 Summary

The discussion of the findings has highlighted: (1) the outcomes of consumer-store interactions; (2) types of interdependence; (3) types of relationships (locating them on a spectrum in terms of the interdependence and meanings); (4) forms of relationships and (5) developmental paths of consumer store relationships. Interpretations of the findings discussed in this chapter have drawn on relationship theories presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter Summary:

In this chapter, discussion and interpretations of the findings have been presented in terms of the outcomes of consumer-store interactions in the light of the interpersonal relationship theories discussed in Chapter 6. The themes have been identified from participants' own accounts in their interviews. We have explored the following characteristics and features of consumer/store relationships: content and meanings of interactions; types of interdependence; types of affective bonds; types of relationships; forms of relationships and developmental paths of relationships.

CHAPTER 10

CONSUMER-STORE RELATIONSHIPS (II)

This chapter aims to present the research findings with respect to consumer/store relationships at the participants' 'lived' experience level. This chapter will focus on discussion and interpretation of relationship dimensions, which characterise the developmental stages of consumer/store relationships. Moreover, the interpersonal relationship theories will be applied to the analysis and interpretation of these relationship dimensions. Indeed, the dimensions of relationship qualities (corresponding to different stages of relationships) have been investigated through the exploration of 'snapshots' of these relationship stages. The developmental stages of consumer/store relationships have focused on the following phases such as 'initiation', 'developing', 'maintaining', 'sustaining' and 'deteriorating' stages. In addition, the findings and interpretations will be used to elaborate the second stage of the Consumer/Store Relationship Model (described in Chapter 1).

10.1 Attraction and Initiation of Relationships

Many studies have explored the developmental stages of different types of relationships. In these studies, the initial stage of relationships has been termed the 'sampling', 'stimulus', 'unilateral awareness', and 'initiating' stage (See Table 6.2). It has been suggested that the main factors affecting the initiation of relationships include: (1) initial encounter ('selecting' someone to interact with); (2) perception and evaluation of others' attributes/qualities; (3) inclination to affiliate one another and (4) attraction to each other. We are now going to discuss the themes related to various issues at the initiation stage of consumer/store relationships. Indeed, the issues investigated include 'first encounter', 'first impression' (initial perception and evaluation), 'attraction' and 'affiliation'.

10.1.1 Factors Affecting the First Encounters between Consumers and Stores

The analysis has identified various variables that can initiate interactions between consumers and stores. The factors identified include 'deliberate choice', 'chance meeting', 'others' recommendations' and 'environmentally-induced'. Indeed, similar variables have also been identified in Fournier's (1998) consumer/brand relationship study.

Firstly, our analysis has revealed that environmental factors can initiate interactions between consumers and stores. These environmental factors include both social and physical environment factors. In terms of social environment, participant's experiences have shown that family associations with stores can affect the initiation of consumer/store relationships. For example, Clare described how she started to shop in ASDA.

> *I used to shop at ASDA when it was not ASDA...because I used to go there with my parents who used to shop there. Then when it changed to ASDA, we still carried on and supported them.* ...

From Clare's shopping experiences, we can suggest that there is a strong association between Clare's family and the ASDA store. Indeed, Clare's shopping experiences with her parents in her childhood and her family's preference for the store and the products have had a significant effect on Clare's initiation and further development of relationship with ASDA store.

The analysis has shown that consumers' initial interactions with stores can be imposed externally by social environmental factors. The factors identified in the research include (1) family member's preferences for stores and products and (2) special consumption occasions (such as gift giving, birthday parties, dinner parties and Christmas). For example, stores and brands can represent consumers' shared preference with family members and thus express consumers' relational self. In addition, it can be suggested that family members' preference for stores and products can also become a factor (social/family environment), which can affect the initiation and continuity of consumer/store relationships. Doreen talked about M&S food.

> *My Dad, you know, he always worries about it if you buy biscuits. You don't know if it is tough or not. He says 'go to M&S'. That is why I go to M&S to buy it. You know it is always good.*

We can suggest that Doreen's Dad's strong preference for M&S products can induce her to buy things for him from M&S and thus affect her interactions with M&S store.

In terms of physical environment, the location of store can be a key factor for the initiation of consumer/store relationships. For example, many participants have talked about how ease of access to supermarkets has made them start to shop in these stores. For example, Lucy described how she started to shop in Morrison's, ASDA, and ALDI:

> *Probably I have been to Morrison's twice and I used to go to ASDA. I used to work in Lancaster and Morecambe College. Sometimes when I finished work, I walked across to ASDA to buy some ingredients...I have also been to ALDI on Morecambe road once when I worked there. I was not interested in that. I have never been there ever since.*

Barbara also described how she started to shop in Booths and Sainsbury's:

> *When did you start to shop in Booths?*
>
> *When we moved here.... When we first married, we lived in the flat on the ...in Lancaster. I went to Sainsbury's because that was the nearest place.*

The research has also revealed that participants can make a voluntary choice to initiate relationships with stores. This voluntary decision can be referred to as the 'deliberation' factor. For example, Lucy talked about her shopping experiences in M&S stores:

> *We used to live in Hoghton. It is a small place, a market town. There was not M&S. Perhaps once a fortnight, I would go to the big town where there was M&S or John would go....*
>
> *Yogurt, crisps and bread rolls, cooked meat, and potatoes, and sometimes I would buy sausages. I tend to go on Friday from work because it opens till 6 o'clock so I go straight down from work. Then I buy treats for Clare, special treats.*

Lucy has been shopping in M&S since she was in another city. From her description we can suggest that she likes M&S stores. Thus, after she moved to Lancaster, she deliberately initiated a relationship with the M&S store in Lancaster. Now she has been shopping in M&S regularly for over 14 years. Indeed Lucy's initiation of the relationship with M&S Lancaster store reflects participant's conscious deliberation decision. Indeed, Vera also described similar experiences with Sainsbury's:

> *The reason I like Sainsbury's is that I worked in London years ago. They had a Sainsbury's store down there then and it is a Southern company. I used to really love it, very classy store. I was so thrilled when it came to Lancaster. ...That is why I love Sainsbury's.*

We can suggest that the 'deliberation' theme can reflect participants' preference for the retailer. In addition, consumer's preference for retailers can have the 'spill-over' effect and can be extended to different stores of the same retail chain.

The analysis has also revealed that a 'chance meeting' is a variable to initiate the interactions between consumers and stores. For example, Helen described how she started to shop in TESCO:

But I would drop my children at the dancing school and go to look around at TESCO, this sort of thing to do. I realise that it is a good shop and they have nice quality vegetables and nice quality food there. So I kind of swap to there instead of doing Morrison's every week. I go there because I like the quality.

In fact, from Helen's description, she does not shop in the small TESCO shop in Morecambe. However, we can suggest that Helen initiated her interactions with the TESCO store in Carnforth completely by chance. She then developed a 'committed partnership' relationship with the store.

The fourth variable for the initiation of consumer/store relationships is other people's recommendations. For example, Beverly described how she has begun to shop in Morrison's:

How long have you been shopping in Morrison's?

Not too long, probably about five or six years. ... I went there because one of the girls at work showed us to Morrison's. You get more offers and buy one get one free deal, or three for prices of two.

Beverly started to shop in Morrison's because of another person's introduction. Indeed, Beverly developed a good relationship ('best friend') with Morrison's.

To sum up, consumers can initiate interactions with stores under various circumstances. These factors can affect the subsequent relationship development. After the initial interactions between consumers and stores, consumers develop their first impression of these stores. Indeed, this is a crucial stage for the development of consumer/store relationships. We are now going to discuss the issues in respect of consumers' first impressions of stores.

10.1.2 First Impressions

The analysis has shown that participants can form stereotypical impressions of stores. These impressions are formed from their perceptions of social/symbolic cues of store attributes (such as store atmosphere, sales staff, merchandise, location, and other customers). These impressions can be positive and negative. These stereotypical impressions are important as they can guide participants' shopping activities and enhance or prohibit consumer/store relationship development. In addition, the analysis has also suggested that participants can make different efforts to process the information in different stores. The analysis has revealed that there is an association between the modes that consumers use for information processing and their feelings and shopping motivations in these stores. For example, Helen talked about her impressions of TESCO.

> *The store is brighter and seems very clean and you see people cleaning all the time. In Morrison's you might get a basket/shopping trolley. Someone might have left receipts or shopping lists, some of these things in it. It is probably ok but it does not seem as clean and attractive.*

Indeed, Helen expressed her impressions of TESCO when she shopped there for a short period of time (two months). It can be suggested that Helen has paid much attention to the details of the store (TESCO). In addition, Helen attributes the clean and attractive environment of TSECO to the store's intentional efforts to provide a good store environment for consumers. Moreover, she also attributes some incidental events that happened to her to the stores' inherent attitude /good intention to customers:

> *I think they (the staff) are more polite in TESCO and they talk to you more. And in Morrison's, they don't talk as much. It depends. Sometimes you get someone talkative and more helpful. Some of them are more helpful than others, whereas TESCO is more consistent. Everybody asks what you want and if they can help you pack or if you want help or so. You know you are going to get out of the store quickly and someone will help you and you don't feel it is as much a burden when someone is there to help you.*

Helen regards the features (such as 'being helpful' and 'talking to consumers') as inherent characteristics of the staff in the TESCO store. However, in contrast, in Morrison's, similar staff behaviour can only be regarded as some individual characteristics of the staff. In addition, for Helen, staff behaviour in Morrison's occurred only incidentally rather than characterising the intrinsic features of the store:

They (the staff in TESCO) seem friendly and they value you as a customer.

They also give you rewards for taking your own carrier bags there.... In TESCO, you feel encouraged, so you feel comfortable.

There was carer week and these people just were able to tell the local people about the local carers and what they did. You find things like that.

You feel like sort of connected although it is a big store.

Susan: you have the sense of feeling...

Helen: belonging...

From the details that Helen can remember of TESCO, we can suggest that the process of impression formation is quite deliberate and effortful. According to social cognition theories (discussed in Chapter 6), it can be suggested that Helen's information processing model ('naïve scientist') can reflect her motivation and need for belonging, connection and maintaining of self concept. Indeed, from Helen's description of her experiences in TESCO, we can suggest that her experiences in TESCO can be descried as 'being connected', 'belonging' and 'getting personality support'. In addition, the analysis has shown that consumers' impressions of stores at the first encounters/interactions are crucial for further store choice, the nature and quality of relationships with stores.

10.1.3 Affiliation

According to relationship theories, it can be suggested that affiliation can be a characteristic that characterise the initial stage of consumer/store relationships. We can define 'affiliation' as participants' willingness to become involved in interactions with stores. Indeed, the analysis of participants' experiences has indicated that a blend of familiarity, attraction and similarity can function together to enhance the psychological closeness ('affinity') between participants and their stores. We are now going to discuss the findings related to 'affiliation' and 'affinity' issues in consumer/store relationships.

10.1.3.a Attraction and Attractiveness

Attraction is a dimension of relationships at the initial encounters between people. Attraction has been defined as the 'stated liking'. It has also been suggested that 'liking' is based on a person's evaluation of the objective values of his/her relationship partner according to his/her goals and values (Duck, 1977).

In this research, attraction has also been referred to as the positivity of participants' responses to stores based on their evaluation of store attributes in respect of participants' goals and values. The analysis has shown that, for the majority of participants, at the early period of their interactions with stores, attraction of stores lies in stores' functional support for participants' grocery shopping tasks. Indeed, it can be suggested that consumers are attracted to stores because of stores' functional values. This can represent the initial stage of consumer/store relationships. Indeed, the analysis has identified various factors, which can affect the attraction of stores for consumers.

10.1.3.b Factors Enhancing the Initial Attraction

In Chapter 6, we discussed various factors that can affect the initial attraction between partners in relationships. Indeed, three factors affecting initial attraction of consumer/store relationships have been identified from the data. They have been referred to as 'proximity', 'mere exposure' and 'similarity'.

In terms of 'proximity', the analysis has identified two dimensions of proximity. The dimensions identified are 'physical distances' and 'easy accessibility'. The theme that emerged from the data is that consumers tend to shop in stores that are either physically close or easy to access. These themes have been discussed as the 'convenience' shopping motivation.

The analysis has suggested that the importance of proximity for consumer/store relationships lies in the following potentialities. Indeed, proximity can potentially (1) increase the possibility and frequency for consumers to shop in the store, (2) increase the possibility of the development of familiarity with the store and (3) increase consumer' involvement in more interactions with the store. Therefore, we can suggest that proximity is a factor that can enhance the attractiveness of stores for consumers.

With regard to 'mere exposure', from participants' experiences, we can suggest that 'mere exposure' is also a variable that can increase the attraction between consumers and stores. Indeed, the factor 'mere exposure' has been referred to as passive contact - such as a nod of the head or some brief greetings (e.g., Moreland and Beach, 2004, p.89). In fact, 'personalising' is a kind of shopping pleasure for consumers in supermarkets. Indeed, various source of 'personalising' has been identified (such as the 'recognition between consumers and the staff' and 'recognition between consumers and other consumers'). Indeed, it can be suggested that various source of 'personalising' experiences discussed previously can be categorised as 'mere exposure'. In addition, analysis has suggested that 'mere exposure' can enhance consumers' affection towards the staff, other customers and the stores. Indeed, affective experiences (such recognition, acceptance, warmth) can further affect consumers' emotions towards stores and increase the attractions of stores for consumers.

Regarding similarity, the analysis has suggested that similarity can also enhance the attraction of stores for consumers. Indeed, this theme has reflected the notion that similarity can affect the attraction of partners to each other in a relationship. Firstly, the analysis has indicated that similarity between customers in a store can enhance the attraction between customers and subsequently increase the attractiveness of the store for consumers. Indeed, people choose to shop in stores where they can socially and psychologically identify with other customers. Therefore, it can be suggested that stores are more attractive for people, where other customers are similar to them (in-group members). The research has shown the relevant characteristics/qualities participants used for social comparison. These qualities identified include clothes, social status, age and some values/beliefs. Thus, it can be suggested that participants derive intra-group similarities in the store contexts.

Secondly, in addition to the similarities between consumers and other customers, the analysis has suggested that participants can also derive a sense of similarity between consumers and the stores. Indeed, this can be achieved through joint activities and various resources, which can represent shared attitudes and values between consumers and the stores. As discussed in the 'spiritual self' section, stores carry the products and conduct social responsibility programmes. Indeed, consumers can express their morality and ethics through the purchase of products and the participation in stores' programmes. For example, Helen described her activities in TESCO:

> *...They give you rewards for taking your own carrier bags there. I like the sort of green issue that you can take your own bag. You feel you help the environment and they reward you by giving you points on your care by taking*

your own bags... ...because you hear ...the global warming and I feel I am doing my bit by taking my bags and reusing them. In Morrison's, they would be very surprised if I took my own carrier bags (Laughter). I don't feel comfortable because they don't encourage you. However, in TESCO, you feel encouraged so you feel comfortable.

Re-using carrier bags can be a means for Helen to disclose/express her attitudes towards eco-issues. Indeed, she feels that this attitude can be shared between her and TESCO store. Therefore, she believes that she is supported by the store and hence feels comfortable to do that in TESCO. Indeed, similarities of attitudes and beliefs (shared between consumers and stores) can become external validation system to support consumers' self-concept. In addition, similarities of values and beliefs can also be manifested at the group level. Indeed, consumers can display and communicate their values and beliefs using stores and brands as symbolic medium. Indeed, other consumers may these values and beliefs. Thus, consumers can derive a sense of similarity with other customers and feel recognition and acceptance from other customers. They can thus further develop group affiliation and belonging. Therefore, it can be suggested that similarities between consumers and stores can enhance the attractiveness of the stores for consumers.

10.1.3.c Familiarity

The analysis has suggested that familiarity can enhance attractions between consumers and stores. In terms of familiarity, the first dimension can be referred to as participants' cognitive knowledge of store layout and products. For example, Lucy and Clare have emphasised the importance of the cognitive familiarity of store for their shopping experiences. Indeed, all participants have stressed that cognitive familiarity with the store is crucial for their experience in the store and their willingness to shop in the store. Many participants' experiences have reflected this theme. Indeed, familiarity with store layout and products makes grocery-shopping tasks easier. This can enhance the first aspect of attraction - the cognitive and functional aspect. In addition, familiarity can also generate a sense of control, which can potentially make stores become part of the self (extended self). In addition, familiarity and control of store environments can generate emotional support for stores. The second dimension of familiarity can be referred to as consumers' familiarity with other customers and sales staff. This has been illustrated in the 'mere exposure' effect on attraction. This aspect of familiarity can increase the second aspect of attraction - the affective component of attraction. Familiarity has been regarded as containing 'functional value', 'hedonic meaning' and 'expressive meaning'. It can be suggested that familiarity can enhance stores' attractiveness to consumers.

To sum up, we can suggest that familiarity, attraction and similarity can work together to strengthen relationships between consumers and their stores. In addition, we can also suggest that these three factors function together to generate a sense of 'affinity' that brings participants, other customers, and the store together psychologically.

10.2 Developing Relationships

The developing stage of relationships has been described as the 'surface contact' 'transition stage' (perceived similarity and orientations, Levinger and Snock, 1972) and 'value comparison' stage (focusing on information such as attitudes, values and interests, Murstein, 1977). In addition, intimacy has been regarded as an indicator of the developing stage of relationships. Indeed, communication and self–disclosure are important factors for the development of intimacy. Studies have also shown that communication and self–disclosure are important factors for the 'developing stage' relationships. We are now going to discuss the relevant issues (such as intimacy and love) related to the 'developing' stage of consumer/store relationships.

10.2.1 Communications and Intimacy

Verbal and nonverbal communication can influence intimacy (*feelings and expressions of closeness, appreciation and affection*, Keeley and Hart, 1994, p.153) between relationship partners. Indeed, the themes that have emerged from the data have also revealed this notion. Communications can occur between consumers and stores (sales staff, store environments, products, other objects and activities). In addition, communications can also take place between consumers and other consumers. Indeed, the analysis has suggested that intimacy between consumers and stores can be developed through communications and through the sharing of verbal and nonverbal symbols between: (1) consumers and stores and (2) consumers and other consumers in stores.

Firstly, the analysis has shown that various kinds of verbal communications occurred between consumers and the stores. In addition, verbal communications can increase consumers' intimacy towards stores. Firstly, verbal communications can take place between consumers and the sales staff. For example, Helen described that she can have a chat with the checkout staff in TESCO. Indeed, small chat between her and the staff makes her feel good and subsequently makes her feel connected to the staff and the store.

> *I think they (the staff) are more polite in TESCO and they talk to you more. The staffs are so friendly. They might not know you. You feel they try to extend the connection with customers.*

In the interviews, participants have repeatedly described their experiences of communicating with staff in stores and their feelings about it. Therefore, we can suggest that through verbal communications between consumers and the sales staff, consumers and staff can express their attitudes and affection towards each other. In other words, participants' experiences have revealed their feelings of intimacy (closeness and affection) towards the staff. Moreover intimacy between consumers and the staff can also be extended to store level. For example, Helen talked about her feeling of connection with the TESCO store:

> *You feel like sort of connected although it is a big store (TESCO).*

Secondly, verbal communications can also take place between consumers and their friends in stores. Many participants have described that they 'feel good' and 'happy' when they talk to somebody they know in supermarkets. For example, Lucy described her experiences in Booths:

> *You meet someone and you can have a quick chat. On Monday I met my neighbour across the road and we chatted in there... It makes you feel good and quite happy. I met somebody from work. You don't have time to talk when you have been working. You meet them in Booths and you have a quick chat with them. It is quite good.*

We can suggest that this type of verbal communication can also enhance intimacy between consumers and stores, which entails consumers' feelings of affection towards other customers and stores.

The analysis has shown that non-verbal communications in stores can enhance intimacy between consumers and stores. The analysis has revealed three aspects of non-verbal communications in store contexts.

The first kind of non-verbal communication can occur between consumers and the staff. The analysis has shown that the consumers' and the staff's body movement/language can be a means to express their attitudes and affection toward each other non-verbally. For example, Helen experienced non-verbal communications with the sales staff in Boots through her observation and reaction to the staff's body movement:

> *I had a bad experience when I had chicken pox and I had scars all over my face. I went to Boots to see the chemists and the lady kept avoiding serving me by looking at my appearance. It was not very nice. I think she did not catch whatever, you know. I know I was not contagious or anything. She kept sort of looking away. It was horrible because I had so many sores on my face. I think she was trying to avoid serving me.*

It has been suggested that body-movement can be a better means to derive people's attitude than verbal communication (Argyle, 1969). From Helen's experiences, she can know the staff's attitudes through observing their body language. Indeed, she can further project staff's attitude and the related affective state (such as acceptance/rejection, approval/disapproval, and even affection/disaffection towards her). Indeed, the analysis has suggested that consumers are motivated to seek for comfort, recognition, and social approval from the staff in store environments. Indeed, consumers can derive their phenomenal self from their perceptions of others observed behaviour in store environment. Indeed, non-verbal communications between consumers and staff is an important means to communicate these affective attitudes and feelings. The nonverbal communication between consumers and staff can affect feelings, affections and the extent of closeness between them. Therefore, it can be suggested that non-verbal communication can affect the development of intimacy between consumers and the store.

The analysis has also revealed that nonverbal communications can happen between consumers and other consumers in stores. For example, Clare has described her experiences in ASDA:

> *I think a lot of people must go on the same day because you do tend to see a lot of the same faces and sometimes you sort of smile at somebody because you recognize them. I think that is quite nice and makes you feel more comfortable and more relaxed.*

We can suggest that Clare communicates with other customers by using her facial expressions to show her recognition for them. Indeed, non-verbal communication can be executed through various ways. The means of nonverbal communication has been summarised as: *human body-body movement, facial expression, eye gaze, touch, vocal activity, and personal space* (Keeley and Hart, 1994, p.136). In the research, many participants have described their non-verbal communications with other customers in store contexts. Indeed, participants' experiences have shown that nonverbal communications between participants and other consumers can influence feelings of comfort, safety, recognition and affection in the store. These feelings can further affect intimacy between consumers and stores.

Thirdly, analysis reveals that nonverbal communication can occur between consumers and store environments. The communication is conducted through '*static codes*' (Keeley and Hart, 1994, p.136). The static codes in store environments include primarily the artefacts in the store (products, store layout, store presentations, and other decors) and the physical appearance of other customers (age, race, gender, and clothing). It can be suggested that the functions and meanings of these static codes in store can be experiential/hedonic, expressive (self-concept: personal level) and symbolic (group identity). Indeed, the analysis has shown that the positive effects of non-verbal communication through these codes can be experiential (pleasure), expressive (taste at the individual and group level) and affection (positive self-regard) and emotional (affiliation, belonging and identification). Therefore, it can be suggested that non-verbal communications in stores can influence consumers' intimacy towards the store and the quality of relationship between consumers and the store.

The analysis has also suggested that in store contexts, verbal communication between consumer and sales staff can be limited in terms of depth. Thus, it has to be stressed that the verbal form of self-disclosure is limited in stores. For example, Helen described her communications with staff in Sainsbury's:

> *I go to Sainsbury's and I go to the same lady every morning or twice a week. We now have a chat... We talk about the weather... kind of small talk.*

In marketing literature, verbal communications has been emphasised as a factor affecting the development of commercial relationships ('commercial friendship' see the discussion in Chapter 3). In addition, in Chapter 3, we have also discussed that some researchers have emphasised the limits of verbal communications between consumers and the staff in retailing contexts. It is further argued that the limited verbal self disclosure can make the relationship notion very difficult to comprehend (if not completely infeasible) in mass consumer markets. From the analysis in the research, it can be suggested that verbal communications between consumers and the staff is only one way for consumer to communicate with stores. Other types of communications can provide the means for communications between consumers and stores. In addition, the analysis has revealed that various kinds of communications can enable consumers to experience and express closeness, affection, recognition and appreciation towards people (staff and other customers) and the store itself. Indeed, various types of communications can enhance consumers' intimacy towards stores.

10.2.2 Liking and Love

As discussed in Chapter 6, one indicator of the 'developing stage' of relationships is the 'liking' or 'love' that relationship partners express to each other. Indeed, the analysis has revealed that participants have expressed their liking for the stores. They use 'like' to express their positive evaluations of these stores in terms of functional and even hedonic experiences. For example, Lucy talked about Booths:

In Lancaster, there are not many choices. There are Sainsbury's and Booths. I like Booths. It is nice that I can get different things. I like the cheese... the fresh meat counter. Good quality of meat.

From her description, it can be suggested that Lucy's 'liking' of these stores is derived from her positive evaluations of store attributes. Indeed, many participants have given positive judgments of store attributes from the functional perspective. Moreover, by linking consumers' judgments of store attributes with their meanings for participants' life-role tasks, it can be suggested that these evaluations can generate consumers' 'liking' for stores (see more discussion in 9.3 'Relationship as affective bonds').

The interviews have also shown that participants have explicitly used the word 'love' to express their affections towards stores. Therefore, we suggest that we can use the types of love identified in interpersonal relationship theories as a metaphor to describe the 'love' between consumers and stores. The analysis has identified four types of love between consumers and stores: 'erotic'; 'enrichment'; 'companionate'; and 'regard' love.

It has been suggested that 'erotic' love can be associated with 'pleasure, arousal and excitement'. In addition, erotic love has been referred to as an experience of 'erotic passion' and the 'desire for contact with the other' (Rempel and Burris, 2005, p.303). We have discussed how Vera started her relationship with Sainsbury's in Lancaster based on her voluntary choice. Indeed, Vera described her experiential feelings in Sainsbury's:

The reason I like Sainsbury's is that I worked in London years ago. They have

Sainsbury's store down there then and it is a Southern company. I used to really love it, very classy store. I was so thrilled when it came to Lancaster. They only came to Lancaster because of the university. ...That is why I love Sainsbury's.

Sainsbury's is a very nice store to go around... The wine section in Sainsbury's is larger and is more central. ...But I like to look into the bottles and into the countries... especially... holidays in France and Germany. You know it is quite nice feeling and especially when the summer comes and the barbeque...You go to get the beer and wine and it is so nice.

Indeed, Vera used the word 'love' to describe her feelings towards Sainsbury's. From her description, we suggest that her love for Sainsbury's can be described as 'erotic love'. Her experiences in Sainsbury's can be described as 'arousal' (associated with her fantasies). Her experiences have suggested that she looks forward to shopping there. These experiences can induce emotionally passionate desire and the longing for 'reunion'. It has been argued that erotic love is an instrumental form of love. In addition, the other partner in the relationship is generally valued and idealized. Hence, the other partner can become the source of rewarding and pleasurable desire (Rempel and Burris, 2005). In addition, we have discussed in detail that consumers can have 'sensory stimulation' in stores and the experiential feelings generated through interactions with store attributes. We can suggest that these experiential hedonic experiences can possibly generate 'erotic love' between consumers and stores.

The second type of love between consumers and stores that emerged from the data can be described as 'enrichment' love. It has been argued that 'enrichment' love has been associated with satisfaction derived from self-enhancement (self expansion) and personal wellbeing (Aron, et al, 1992). We have discussed that 'Hoped for' self that for Doreen, products of M&S can represent her possible self (her aspirations). Her experiences also indicate that when she goes to M&S, she feels she experiences her 'hoped for' self (self-enhancement). For example, Doreen experiences in M&S can suggest that she can have 'enrichment' love for M&S:

> *I love to shop in M&S...I never have a trolley. I only have a shopping basket with a few bits in it... They do some plums at the moment, absolutely beautiful plums, ready to eat, absolutely gorgeous...But it is expensive, very expensive. You see some woman going there with a trolley. You don't know how they can afford it. They must be very rich. It would be nice to be able to do that. If I win the lottery, that is where I will shop-M&S.*

It has been argued that enrichment is an instrumental form of love and the provisions of relationship partner can be regarded more as amenity (Rempel and Burris, 2005, p.305). In addition, the theme emerged is that consumers can fulfil their self-enhancement through their interactions with stores. Thus, it can be suggested that expressive meanings which consumers derive from their shopping experiences can generate the 'enrichment' love for stores.

The analysis has also revealed that another type of love, which consumers can develop for stores, can be termed 'companionate love'. The analysis has revealed that most participants love some stores where they shop in. In these stores, they can get support in respect of self extension; self expression and self discovery at individual level, relational level and collective level. Indeed, consumers can share their values and beliefs with stores and other customers. Consumers can also experience recognition, acceptance, understanding, warmth and belonging. For participants, we can suggest that visiting these stores is just like meeting friends. As discussed in Chapter 6, this type of love has been labelled as 'friendship love' or 'companionate' love. This type of love is associated with intimacy and mutual affirmation. Indeed, as discussed earlier, affective aspect of affiliation, attraction and intimacy has all illustrated the expressions and manifestations of companionate love between consumers and stores.

The fourth type of love that emerged from the data can be termed 'regard' love. As discussed in Chapter 6, this kind of love is derived from the observed positive qualities of the partner. The meanings derived from this partnership are instrumental. In addition, by simply associating with such a partner, people can gain social approval or personal satisfaction. For example, Helen talked about her experiences of purchasing a gift for her Mum and in-laws at M&S:

> *Luxury... I was looking for mother's day and birthday for my Mum and in-laws... that is acceptable gifts for them.*

From Helen's experience, we can suggest that Helen's love for M&S can be 'regard' love. In addition, stereotypical user of stores and brands can represent consumers' presenting self on special consumption occasions. By consuming these brands participants can gain social approval and achieve social conformity in some special consumption situations. In addition, it has been suggested that consumers can derive personal satisfaction when they can associate with stores, which have good quality (see 'consumer-company relationship' section discussed in Chapter 3). For example, Helen talked about her respect for TESCO store:

> *They had a stand at the back of the tills and they were advertising about carers. ...I think TESCO is kind and they let the organisation in to advertise what they are doing in the community. ...So I think that kind of thing is nice because it is sort of involved in the community as well. TESCO is not just a big national store taking money from the community. They might like to give a little bit back.*

From Helen's experiences, we can suggest that Helen perceives the positive qualities of TESCO in terms of their conduct of Corporate Social Responsibility Programmes. By shopping in TESCO, she feels she can get both personal satisfaction through participation in these programmes and social approval by associating with these stores. Therefore we can suggest that Helen's love for TESCO can be termed 'regard' love.

To summarise, the analysis of participants' interviews has suggested that consumers could potentially forge various affective bonds with stores. These affective bonds can range from 'liking' to various types of 'love'. These affective bonds can indicate 'developing stage' of consumer/store relationships. In addition, these connections can affect the nature and further development of consumer/store relationships. For example, as we illustrated in Chapter 9, if consumer/store relationships are more functional-oriented. Then the affective quality of the relationship will be more associated with 'liking' based on objective evaluations. Consumers tend to develop functional interdependence and these interdependences are 'exogenous' (externally imposed). Indeed, the affective quality of the relationship is more associated with intense emotional experiences (such as various kinds of love). Consumers tend to develop experiential and expressive interdependence and these interdependences are more voluntary and self-determined. We are now going to discuss the 'maintaining' stage of relationships.

10.3 Maintaining Stage of Relationships

In Chapter 6, we discussed that the 'interdependence', 'commitment' and 'trust' can be indicators of the 'maintaining' stage of relationships. Indeed, it has been suggested that commitment and trust indicate the tendency of participants in a relationship to reinforce/sustain the relationship over a long period of time. In addition, these two constructs also involve participants' willingness to be dependent on each other (Reis and Rusbult, 2004). Therefore we are going to discuss themes associated with interdependence, commitment and trust in respect of consumer/store relationships that have emerged from the data.

10.3.1 Interdependence

Interdependence as the property of social interactions has been illustrated. As discussed in Chapter 6, interdependence can be an indicator of the maintaining stage of long-term relationships. The analysis has revealed that the type of interdependences can determine the type and nature of commitment.

10.3.2 Commitment and Types of Consumer-Store Relationships

The analysis has revealed that commitment (to 'content' and to 'continuity') can be associated with different types of consumer/store relationships. First, it can be suggested that there is a division between consumers' commitment to continuity and their commitment to content of consumer/store relationships. In the current research, analysis has suggested that for type A and Type B relationship, consumers' 'commitment to content' is more predominant than 'commitment to continuity'. Indeed, for these types of relationships, continuity of relationships requires consistency in the content. In other words, continuity of the relationship is conditional upon change of the content of the relationship. For example, Vera described how the stores of her shopping are determined by her life stages. Indeed, when her life stage changes, her relationships with the stores can also come to an end:

> *When my children were younger, I shopped more. I worked for a time in Morecambe. I shopped in Morrison's because I was working in Morecambe. I don't shop in Morrison's now because I have to drive through and drive back and the traffic is difficult, so there is no point. I also shopped in ASDA when the children were a lot younger because it is cheaper and, you know, it was good value for money. But again I did recently get a lot of alcohol from there... but it is not something I would choose for a regular shop. I think what is happening now is that my family has grown up and I don't do as much family cooking as I did. Therefore I get smaller amount of regular groceries. ..I don't always cook evening meals. Sometimes we do takeaways. Sometimes we eat out. And*

occasionally I get some ready-made food and do something like that. But I do try to do…on the weekend. And that is for special family time.

From Vera's description, it can be suggested that changes to her family structure brought about changes in terms of life-style, cooking style and shopping styles. In addition, these changes have caused further change of the stores where she conducts her grocery shopping. In addition, we can also suggest that ASDA and Morrison's had more functional values for her. These functional values were associated with her life circumstances. When changes occurred to her life circumstances, functional meanings of these stores decreased. Her commitment to these stores (no matter how long it is) is commitment to the content of relationships. Indeed, this type of commitment is conditional. Therefore, with the vanishing of these conditions, her commitments to these relationships also came to an end. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 9, Type A relationship is uniplex and meanings of this type relationship are associated with functional benefits. Moreover, these functional benefits generally depend on individuals' life circumstances. Therefore if individuals' life conditions changes, these store attributes will not entail the same meanings and benefits for the individuals. Then continuity of the content of the interactions is implausible. Ultimately, continuity of the relationships is not necessary.

For Type B relationship, the meanings of the relationship can be functional and experiential (see discussion in Chapter 9). In addition to the support for their shopping tasks, consumers can gain pleasures from interactions with store environments. It can be suggested that hedonic experiences rely on many external conditions (from both participants' side and stores' side). In addition, for this type of relationship, consumers' commitment to relationship also generally depends on the content of relationship. Moreover, content of relationships can be conditional upon change of consumers' life-circumstances (such as age and income). Content of relationships also relies on the consistency of store conditions (such as size, layout, and products). If change happens on either side, content of relationship will change. Indeed, participants' experiences have suggested that experiential meanings derived from their interactions can be reduced. In addition, commitment to content will decrease. Consequently, continuity of the relationship will also become problematic. For example, Barbara's experiences reflect that changes of store environments have caused changes of her relationships with the store.

> *I preferred it when it was smaller but they expanded it and this year, they have made all the aisles higher and longer and I feel all in closed in now. I feel a bit more like I am doing ASDA in Sainsbury's than I used to. ...I don't know because they had some aisles where there was a break in the middle and all those are gone now. You can only go right the way down along the aisles and turn around. They are higher and it just feels claustrophobic to me now.*

Here she uses the words 'hate'; 'loathe' etc to describe her feelings towards Sainsbury's. It can be suggested that changes in Sainsbury's store layout have destroyed her preferences for the store and experiential/hedonic meanings she used to experience in Sainsbury's. In addition, in terms of her relationship with Sainsbury's, her commitment to content is more predominant than commitment to continuity. When content of the relationship changes, her commitment to Sainsbury's is reduced. In addition, the nature of her relationship with Sainsbury's also changed (from Type B to Type A).

For Type C relationship, the analysis has suggested that 'commitment to continuity' is more important than 'commitment to content'. Indeed, one theme that emerged is that participants attempt to adapt their shopping activities (change the content) in order to continue the relationship. Thus we can suggest that this reflects consumers' commitment to 'continuity' of relationships. For example, from Helen's experiences, we can suggest that Helen's relationship with TESCO is Type C relationship. With change of her life circumstances, she has to deal with external constraints (such as time pressure) which have made it difficult for her to access TESCO store. However, she is determined to continue her relationship with TESCO by changing her way of shopping. Indeed, we can suggest that she changes her shopping activities to ensure the continuance of the relationship with TESCO.

> *I would have done that in TESCO. Because I don't go out that way to Carnforth anymore, I go to Morrison's and sometimes I go to ASDA for convenience factor although TESCO is my favourite. ... Now my circumstances have changed and I am studying, I don't have the time to travel. ... I have thought about doing online-shopping because if I do that I can do that from TESCO. You know, do it online.*

Therefore, this type of relationship can often be long-term and consumers will strive to continue the relationship. Consumers might direct their behaviour to ensuring its continuance when life-circumstance changes impose more external constraints on their shopping tasks.

10.3.3 Exogenous and Endogenous Commitment

The themes that emerged from the data reveal that forces and drivers for continuity of relationships can be externally–driven. In marketing literature, studies have explored the effect of situational factors on the salience and importance of store attributes. These situational factors include physical surroundings, social surroundings, temporal, antecedent states and task definitions (Belk, 1975). Indeed, the analysis has shown that these factors can become external forces to define the 'content' of consumer/store relationships. In addition, these forces also impose the continuity of consumer/store relationships, which is often 'commitment to content'. The kind of commitment (driven by external factors) is termed as 'exogenous' (Hinde, 1979). In addition, we have discussed the predominant external forces, which can become constraints for consumers' grocery shopping activities (such as time pressure, economic constraints, relational factors and situational factors).

For example, Helen described how she has to juggle between stores under different external constraints.

> *At Christmas,, I would look for extra things we don't normally buy or things for decorating the table. Maybe ASDA would be good for that because they have more variety. ...*
>
> *If TESCO sells clothes, I will forget them (ASDA and Morrison's) all. ...*
>
> *M&S, I go for luxury if I want to buy somebody some nice wine or flowers, I would go there to buy those things but not weekly shopping.*
>
> *Not entirely comfortable (in M&S).... I would not like to go in there without having my hair neatened...*

From Helen's experience, we can suggest that special consumption situations (such as Christmas, dinner party, gifts, treats) impose different roles for Helen to play and also impose different requirements for her life-role tasks related to grocery shopping. Indeed, we can suggest that in some senses, these external forces drive her to shop in ASDA and Morrison's for the convenience factors. These forces can also drive her to shop in M&S for the symbolic meanings of the M&S brand. Indeed, Helen's commitment to these stores can be called the 'exogenous commitment', which is imposed by external situations. Indeed, we can also argue that 'exogenous commitment' may also become part of a prior definition of the relationships between consumers and stores.

The drives for commitment to continuity of relationships can also come from internal factors. This kind of commitment has been termed as – 'endogenous commitment'

(Hinde, 1979). In the research, we can suggest that the drivers for consumers' endogenous commitment can be: (1) the pleasure consumers can experience in the shopping process; (2) self concept and identity derived from interactions with stores; (3) interdependence developed in the relationships especially the 'expressive' interdependence; and (4) the love developed in the relationships. All these forces can enhance consumers' 'commitment to the continuity' of relationships. Indeed, these forces can bring about consumers' endogenous commitment to stores. For example, Vera's commitment to Sainsbury's, Doreen's commitment to M&S, and Helen's commitment to TESCO are not due to external forces. In contrast, their commitments are based on their love for these stores.

There is a dynamic relationship between exogenous and endogenous commitment. This dynamic can reflect the temporal and dynamic nature of consumer/store relationships. Indeed, correspondingly, exogenous commitment can be developed into endogenous commitment and vice versa. For example, Barbara's commitment to Sainsbury's has changed from the more internally–driven (preference to the store) to externally-driven:

> *I go to Sainsbury's when they send me vouchers. Because I don't go, then they send me vouchers. Then I will go while I've got the vouchers and get the money back, and then I stop until they send me more vouchers.*

As described previously, the type of commitment and nature of her relationship with Sainsbury's have changed. Therefore, the drivers for commitment also change from internally to more externally driven.

10.3.4 Signs for Commitment – Private Pledge and Public Pledge

As discussed in Chapter 6, it has been argued that relationships can be symbolized by explicit acts. At the individual level, partners in the relationship define the content and rules of interactions. Therefore, for partners in a relationship, they have a definition of the relationship. The continuity of the relationship either is conditional upon the change of the content or partners in the relationship can direct their behaviour to ensure continuity of the relationship. Therefore, any sign by one partner adapting his/her role or changing behaviour to suit the other partner in order to continue the relationship can be defined as a sign of commitment. This process of development of relationships and commitment is termed 'private pledge' for the relationship (Hinde, 1979).

The interviews have revealed that participants take actions in order to continue the relationship. For example, as discussed previously, Clare described how she adapted her time of shopping to avoid some negative shopping experiences in ASDA:

> *Occasionally if something happened and we cannot go in the daytime, we will go later on. I find if you go later on, a lot of fruits and vegetables are missing ... We do like to go in the morning when all the stock is filled up. And I also find if we go later in the evening, there are a lot of people trying to get the reduced bread. You cannot get near anything. We tend to go on Tuesday morning.*

Clare tries to adapt her role in the relationship with ASDA to optimise the benefits she can get from her interactions with the store. Indeed, Clare has made compromise in order to continue her relationship with the store. Another example is when Helen tried to adapt to on-line shopping in order to adapt to her changing life-circumstances and continue the relationship with TESCO. From Clare and Helen's experiences, it can be suggested that consumers can adapt their shopping patterns or methods to continue their relationships with stores. Indeed, consumers' adaptation of shopping activities can be regarded as a sign of a 'private pledge' for their relationships with stores.

According to interpersonal relationship theories, we can suggest that at the relationship/dyad level, participants can derive part of self-concept from his/her membership in the relationship, together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. The analysis has revealed that consumer/store association can be treated as a social unity. Indeed, recognition of the dyad can be significant for the members of the relationship. It can be suggested that one source of recognition can be derived from the dyad membership. For example, we can suggest that 'club card' from stores can be regarded as a kind of store's recognition of customers to be relationship partners. The 'club card' can also be regarded as an expression of stores' recognition of the value of consumers. For example, Helen talked about her recognition for her relationship with TESCO as a unity through the loyalty card: *You feel you have loyalty because you have the loyalty card.*

The analysis has shown that Helen's relationship can be categorised as a 'committed partnership'. Therefore, the TESCO club card for Helen is not just something that can give her financial rewards (such as vouchers) but also indicates the retailers' recognising and valuing her as a relationship partner. Indeed, these functional rewards and signified recognitions can generate her emotional attachment to the relationship.

It has been argued that another source of recognition of the social unity (consumer-store) is from other people. In addition, the dyad membership can enhance consumers' self-concept and bring about other rewards from other people. This can increase the participant's identification with it. Hinde (1979) termed this as 'the public pledge'. Erikson (1963) contends that real intimacy is possible only after an individual has developed a sense of identity (Monsour, 1994, p.129). The analysis showed that stores and products from stores could represent consumers' relational self or public self. Indeed, these stores and products can be used to communicate shared meanings between participants and their significant others. The rewards - such as sharing preferences and acceptance - can enhance participants' self concept. In addition, their friends and family also recognize consumer/store unity and these recognitions can further bring about social approval and self esteem. Overall these rewards from outside can increase participants' identification with stores and the products. Indeed, these rewards can enhance consumers' recognition of their relationship with stores as a 'social entity'.

10.3.5 Trust

It has been suggested that there are three elements of trust: 'predictability', 'dependability' and 'faith' (Holmes and Rempel, 1986; Wieselquist et al, 1999). The analysis has shown that these elements described above can also enhance the development of trust between consumers and their stores.

The data indicates that consumers can develop trust for stores based on their inference of outcomes of their interactions with stores. For example, Clare has been shopping in ASDA for 25 years:

> *Because we tried different places, sort of one week in Morrison's, we always end up going back to ASDA. I think probably because of the products we like and partly the price. I have found whenever we have been shopping anywhere else for four weeks; I always spend more than we spend in ASDA.*

From Clare's experiences, it can be suggested that the outcomes of her shopping at ASDA are always positive. Indeed, she can always depend on ASDA to do her shopping at low cost. Therefore for her, ASDA is dependable and her shopping outcomes can be predictable. Indeed, we can also suggest that from her description, she can trust ASDA in terms of the outcomes of her shopping. In addition, Helen also described her shopping experiences in some clothes shops.

> *Because they (Wallis, M&S, and BHS) sell the things to suit my taste and for my*

age group I think, and the style, I know certain styles will fit me and they will have certain styles, like wide trousers, not every shop will sell them. I know these three shops would. I know if I go in one of these shops, there will be something I like. ... If I have limited time I would go to these three shops. If I have only one hour I would because I know I am likely to find something there in limited time.

Clearly, Helen expressed her confidence about the outcomes of shopping in a few clothes shops. Indeed, Helen can always rely on these shops to get something she likes. In shopping context, functional benefits are quite fundamental (e.g., Reynolds and Arnold, 2000; Dixon et al, 2005; Terblanche and Boshoff, 2006) for store loyalty. In addition, it has been suggested that functional attributes are one important source for consumers' trust.

In addition to shopping outcomes, another theme that emerged is that the inference of stores' intentions/motivations can be more fundamental for development of trust /distrust between consumers and stores. Indeed, the second theme reflects the 'faith' element for trust development. The analysis has revealed that participants can develop trust for stores if they can be confident about stores' good will to act in the interests of consumers (Doney and Cannon, 1997). Barbara experiences, for example can show how customers form perceptions of stores' intentions:

The things I do dislike about Sainsbury's... I have been there various times. They can have offers and things on adverts. They are not very good at stocking the shelves. You can go to Sainsbury's and there can always be gap in the things you want and then you have to find the assistant to ask and they go off to the store room and invariably they come back and say sorry we have not got it. And I find that very annoying. Booths is a much smaller shop and have much less stock out but they are constantly re-stocking and it is quite rare that they run out of something. I mean that does not happen and that is bound to happen. In Sainsbury's, it seems to happen to me a lot. I go and something I want to buy

> *is not there and I find that quite irritating.*

Although out-of-stock in stores is a common phenomenon and happens to customers all the time in stores, Barbara attributes it to Sainsbury's poor service. She used the words 'always' and 'invariably' to indicate that Sainsbury's does not care about customers at all. Therefore, we can suggest that there is low trust between Barbara and Sainsbury's. However, Barbara trusts Booths and she describes the same phenomenon as 'very rare', 'constantly re-stocking'. It indicates her appreciation of Booths' caring for customers.

Moreover, one store attributes mentioned by all participants is store layout. Participants have repeatedly described how stores always change the store layout. All participants described that stores move things around for their own interest and do not consider customers' needs and feelings. Indeed, participants' negative perceptions of stores' intentions and motivations can therefore damage customer trust for stores. Helen described her experiences in ASDA,

> *I find that I cannot get around ASDA well. ... I find it is not in a particular order. ...I think the purpose is to make you trek around the whole store in order which puts me off because it is exhausting to have to trek around all the things to find the tomato ketchup which is something I have to buy every weeks. And if I forget something at the end I just think most of the time it is too exhausting to go back. I think I will do without that this week. It is not essential.*

All the participants described similar experiences in stores. Indeed, consumers perceive retailers' marketing strategies as ways to increase supermarkets' sales. However, consumers think that stores are not considering customers' shopping experiences. In addition, marketing activities can also be interpreted to be a means to increase store's profits at the cost of consumers' interest. For example, Helen talked about her perceptions of 'buy-one-get-one-free' strategies:

Morrison's and ASDA are not as good standard as TESCO. I think Morrison's sells things on buy one get one free to tempt you in there. Then you end up buying a lot of things you did not need because you feel you're getting a bargain and they are a lot cheaper; whereas TESCO don't have those sort of special offers; not many offers but the food seems better and the fresh food especially is better.

The analysis has suggested that retailers' marketing activities (including relationship marketing activities) can undermine consumers' trust because they are not perceived as manifestation of retailers' intentions for caring consumers' interests. These activities can do harm to consumer/store relationships, especially trust. Many retailers' programmes (such as environmental or community programs) can also enhance consumers' inference of stores' benevolence to consumers' interest based on shared goals and values. The inference of store's good intentions can also enhance consumers' trust of the store. For example, Doreen talked about reusing bags in the supermarkets.

I am sceptical about all of them. I think Sainsbury's probably does more. I will say (I trust) Sainsbury's. I don't trust any big organisations, to be honest. They ...try to get you through the door but you don't know who is there to make sure that they are doing it. But I know that Sainsbury's for years, years and years, has encouraged you to recycle your carrier bags before any of the others started. In Sainsbury's, they used to give you a penny off your shopping cost for each carrier bag you used. I have a big recycling bin to put these carrier bags in which I have used for years now.

We can suggest that Doreen perceive Sainsbury's benevolent intentions more positively with regard to their social responsibility programmes from her own experiences.

Barbara also talked about her perception of supermarkets' social responsibility claims (such as sourcing locally). She always buys local meat and produces.

> *I like Booths. I like the fact that they have local produce. Meat, I will buy British meat. You can get that at M&S. They tend to have British meat. I know Sainsbury's say they do but I am a bit dubious about some of the big supermarkets because it is European Legislation if meat is packed in this country, they can say it is British even if it comes from abroad. I think they should say where it comes from.*

We can see that she is sceptical of some supermarkets' benevolent intentions but she trusts Booths'. Therefore, we can suggest that social responsibility programmes can develop trust/distrust between customers and stores. The positive/negative effect of these programmes on consumers' trust depends on consumers' inferences of stores' motivations/intentions for public and society interest.

The analysis has shown that consumers' inference of store intentions can be derived from various aspects (such as stock, store layout, and retailers' conducts). The fundamental issue is therefore whether stores care about consumers' interests. Indeed, consumers' experiences indicate that all marketing activities and consumer/store interactions have impact on consumer/store relationships (such as trust). This has been stressed by some studies (e.g., O'Malley and Prothero, 2004). These stores, which really care about customers and deliver good service, good products, and genuinely engage in benevolent activities, can earn customers' trust. This theme emerged from participants' experiences in the research.

10.4 Sustaining Relationships

One theme that emerged from the data is that consumers adopt certain behavioural and cognitive mechanisms to sustain ongoing consumer/store relationships.

In terms of behavioural maintenance mechanisms, the analysis has revealed that consumers may change their shopping activities (interaction content) to sustain their relationships with stores. We have discussed that Helen has to change her shopping methods to sustain her relationship with TESCO. Clare also has to change her shopping activities to avoid the negative experiences in ASDA. Helen and Clare behaviour has expressed their private pledge for commitment to the continuity of their consumer/relationships. Indeed from Clare's experience, we can see that she tries to react to the negative experiences more positively. It can be regarded as 'tolerance' for some negative experiences in the relationship. She has to fit her shopping patterns to avoid the situation of the poor stock in ASDA. This is one behavioural maintenance mechanism. Clare behaviour can also be regarded as 'accommodation' behaviour in the relationship. The motivation for this kind of behaviour is to continue the relationship. Indeed, her activities can also reflect the commitment to continuity of the relationship.

In terms of cognitive maintenance mechanism, the first theme, which emerged from the data is consumers' attempt to perceive the alternatives as less desirable. For example, the analysis of Clare's shopping experiences suggests that she has to face the temptation to try different things. However, many external constraints (financial and relational) do not allow her to shop in different supermarkets. In addition, she likes shopping in ASDA. Thus it can be suggested that she is committed to the continuity of her relationship with ASDA. When she talked about the differences between supermarkets:

> *I think sometimes they look different. There probably may be not any difference. The packages are different and they catch your eyes because they look different. ... Sometimes for example you get Sainsbury's own brands. Probably there is not any difference to ASDA's own brands. Maybe they are packed in the same place.*

From Clare's experiences, we can suggest that she denies the differences between products from different supermarkets. Therefore, she won't be tempted to go to other supermarkets, rather than ASDA for grocery shopping. Indeed, this mechanism can make her sustain her relationship with ASDA. This mechanism can be termed the 'devaluation' of alternatives.

The second theme that emerged from the data is that in order to maintain relationships with stores, consumers tend to: (1) minimize the store/retailers' weaknesses /faults and (2) perceive them in a very positive way. For example, Clare described her perceptions of ALDI's marketing strategies:

> *Sometimes you get fliers with special offers on.... But I think sometimes when you go for special offers, when you get there and they have not got them. I think they have only limited amount of offers to get you to the shop. You have to buy something else and I usually do.*
>
> *It feels like a warehouse. But I suppose they try to keep the cost down. I don't think it looks good when you go in. But I suppose it is a good thing which can keep the price down. I think that is why the price is good. But I don't think it gives very good impression in there.*

From Clare experiences, it can be suggested that she knows that ALDI only provides a very limited amount of special offers. In addition, she knows that special offers are the marketing strategy to get people in the store. However, Clare has not perceived ALDI's strategies in a negative way. In addition, she ignores the negative outcomes she has experienced in ALDI. Indeed, the negative outcomes might have been caused by ALDI's strategies. She actually tries to defend ALDI's strategies in this situation. In addition, Clare also perceives ALDI's store environment more positively. It can therefore be suggested that Clare's cognitive strategy can be regarded as the 'biased partnership perceptions'. This is the mechanism that Clare has used to sustain her relationship with ALDI.

10.5 Deteriorating Relationships

The themes that emerged suggest the patterns of deteriorating store relationships can all fit into the '*stress model*' (Fournier, 1998). Firstly, it has been shown that 'environmental stresses' can result in the deterioration and dissolution of store relationships. For example, 'location' and 'ease of access' can be external factors to enhance the initiation and maintenance of consumer/store relationships. However, if the continuity of relationships (commitment to the content) is conditional upon these factors, then changes to the circumstances/conditions can lead to the dissolution of consumer/store relationships. For example, Lucy's shopping experience in ASDA indicated that her choice of shopping at ASDA was due to its easy access. Therefore, when conditions changed, she stopped going there to shop. Indeed, the change of physical situations makes relationship continuity impossible or highly unlikely. Indeed, the situational-imposed stressors can bring about the disturbance to consumer/store relationships. Another example is Barbra's relationship with Sainsbury's. Barbara's moving house has also made her relationship with Sainsbury's deteriorate.

Another environmental stressor for consumer/store relationships can be the encounter with alternative stores. It has been described as '*intrusion of alternatives*' (Fournier, 1998, p.363). For example, Helen's interaction with TESCO leads to the deterioration of her relationships with ASDA and Morrison's, where she has shopped for more than ten years. Indeed, Helen's experiences can be explained by personal relationship theories from social exchange perspective.

From social exchange perspective, CL (comparison level) and CLalt (comparison level of alternative) have been used to describe attraction and dependence between relationship partners and potential alternative choice (Levinger, 1976). For Helen, the attraction and dependence level for ASDA and Morrison's are lower than her comparison level. Her relationship with ASDA and Morrison's are imposed by external constraints. In addition, the CLalt level for TESCO is close or higher than her CL level. Therefore, her relationship with ASDA and Morrison's is in an unattractive instability situation. Therefore, when she starts to shop in TESCO, her relationships with Morrison's and ASDA declined dramatically. Therefore, we can see that the superior alternative can become an environmental stressor for consumer/store relationships.

The second theme is that partner-oriented stresses can lead to the deterioration (even the dissolution) of consumer/store relationships. The disturbances for relationships can be caused by a change of roles, needs, and personality from either side (consumers and stores). For example, from store side, change of store personality (store environments) can cause incongruence between customers' self concept and store image. For example, Sainsbury's changing the store design has led to the deterioration of Barbra's relationships with the store. Barbara hates the store layout of Sainsbury's. In addition, from the customer side, change of consumers' roles and needs can cause the deterioration and even dissolution of consumer/store relationships. For example, Vera used to shop in ASDA. However, after her family growing up, she cooks less and she does not need so many groceries. Indeed, due to these changes in her needs and her roles, her relationship with ASDA was dissolved.

The third theme explored is the 'relational stresses'. It has been suggested that the relational stresses originated from the relationship partners activities. These activities have been described as '*relationship partners break relationship rules, breach trust, fail to keep the promise, neglect the interest of the partner*' (Fournier, 1998, p.363). For example, Doreen's relationship with ASDA experienced dissolution because

ASDA did not keep the required service level. We can suggest that the decline of ASDA service level indicated ASDA failed the expectations Doreen could have for it.

> *It is improved recently. ...It depends on what time of day you go. I always used to go on Friday ... I had two hours to do my shopping so I went to ASDA and that used to be a really good time to go because all the stocks were full. You know they refilled everything. And I did that for about two or three years. Then they went downhill. I sometimes go on Fridays. You could not buy half of the stuff you wanted. So eventually I stopped doing it because it was such as waste of time going when you could not buy what you needed... especially the fruit and veg. You go and you need potatoes but they have not got any. So I stopped going to ASDA and go to Sainsbury's instead.*

We can suggest that stores can fail to deliver the expected level of services to customers. Indeed, this failure can bring about the dissolution of consumer/store relationships.

To summarise, we have explored relationship qualities associated with various developmental stages of consumer/store relationships such as 'initiation', 'developing', 'maintaining', 'sustaining' and 'deteriorating' stages.

10.6 Summary

Chapter 10 has focused on exploring the relationship dimensions related to the developmental stages of consumer/store relationships. These findings are used to construct the second part of the second stage of the Consumer/Store Relationship Model. Indeed, we have portrayed the development of consumer/store relationships in a linear model. However, we should be aware that consumer/store relationships do not necessarily fully develop in the sequences as depicted in the model. Indeed, as discussed in the 'Temporality' of relationships, different type of relationships has different development routes. We have also presented the four main developmental paths of consumer/store relationships.

Chapter Summary:

In this chapter, discussion and interpretation of the findings has been presented in terms of the developmental stages of consumer/store relationships. These themes are identified from individuals' own accounts in the interviews. We have explored a range of features (such as attraction, affiliation, intimacy, liking and love, interdependence, commitment and trust) associated with different stages of consumer/store relationships in order to develop the second stage of the model.

CHAPTER 11

CASE STUDY 1: AMBIVALENCES AND STORE CONSTELLATIONS

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the cases of two participants. The two participants have shared similar experiences and also developed store relationships with similar characteristics. The cases reflect many of the themes seen across a broad range of cases, which have been discussed in the previous chapters. In addition, the cases have also represented typical experiences, which reflect ambivalence between aspects of store meanings. The analysis has shown that the ambivalence has exerted effects on the nature of consumer/store relationships, which have not been emphasized in the earlier chapters. The focus of this chapter moves towards exploring how individual personality factors can affect symbolic and expressive meanings that consumers can derive from shopping and consumption experiences and the further effects of these meanings on the nature of consumer/store relationships.

11.1 Case 1: Clare's Story

Clare is in her forties. She lives with her husband and her daughter in a small village. She works full time to pay for the groceries in the household. She has to do all the grocery shopping and cooking. Indeed, Clare's current life situation is that money is tight and Clare is busy.

Clare's Grocery Store Relationship Portfolios

Clare grew up in a small village. When she was young, there were a lot of corner/local shops in the village. These shops had given her functional supports for her grocery shopping. Indeed, she described that these stores were so convenient that they were always there for an emergency. She talked about how she could get ice-cream from these shops when her friends came to visit her. She could access the shops even at weekends just by knocking on the door. These shops also gave her hedonic experiential meanings. These local shops were the places where she could enjoy grocery shopping because she could get various kinds of social support. She described that in these local shops, she could gossip with the staff and other customers. Indeed, conversations could be very personal. She regarded the staff there as friends because she knew them. In fact, these shops were not only a physical place but also 'third place', which means a lot in her life. In addition, from her descriptions, it can be suggested that the local shops reminded her of her past life. It can be further suggested that corner shops could represent Clare's past self and extended self. Indeed, she has also conveyed an emotional attachment to these stores. These stores for Clare were like 'close friends', with which she had fun together and shared some good times. The self-disclosure has also enhanced intimacy between her and these stores. Thus, it can be suggested that the relationship can be termed as a 'commercial friendship', which has been explored by Price et al (1999).

Clare also described that these stores cannot compete against big supermarkets. Indeed, the prices in these stores are too high. For her, 'getting a few bits' from the stores can cost a whole weekly budget for Clare's grocery shopping. In addition, Clare admits that she tends to buy too much and spend too much in these stores, which she can not afford to do due to her financial situation. Therefore, we can suggest that Clare has to deal with the dilemma of either supporting the local shops or failing to keep to her budget. Indeed, this dilemma represents ambivalence between her life role task fulfilment and her desire to seek hedonic and self–related meanings. In addition, her husband thinks that value for money is important for grocery shopping. From her story, we can suggest that it is important to conform to these values by demonstrating that she shares these values with her husband. Indeed, by sharing beliefs and values, Clare can express and communicate her 'relational self' with the significant others. However, her shopping in Corner shops will not enable her to achieve this. Thus, it can be suggested that shopping in these corner shops can make her face the dilemma between obtaining functional values and deriving hedonic and expressive meanings from her experiences in these stores. Moreover, external constraints (such as financial and relationship factors) make these dilemmas even more severe. Indeed, she feels sorry about her inability to support these corner shops much. In addition, she has to witness the closing down of these stores.

ASDA is the main shop for Clare's grocery shopping. Clare vividly described that she went to ASDA with her parents when she was young. Now she still goes to ASDA every week with her Mum and her brother. Indeed, Clare has been shopping at ASDA for more than twenty years. We can suggest that ASDA has been with her when she went through various life stages. It is the store that has been supporting her life role tasks with respect to grocery shopping. Firstly, the store provides her with functional supports. The functional attributes (such as the location, the prices, and the variety) are crucial for her grocery shopping. Indeed, ASDA always gives Clare good value for money. Thus, she can do the grocery shopping easily within her budget. In fact, after shopping many times in other supermarkets, ASDA always outperforms other supermarkets in terms of value for money. In addition, after many years shopping in ASDA, Clare is familiar with the store, knowing where to go and what to buy. Her familiarity with the store enables her to do the shopping quickly and easily. Therefore, it can be suggested that the functional attributes of ASDA are congruent with her functional needs and requirements.

Secondly, the store can provide the support for her expressive needs. Indeed, she can discover her self concept (personal self) in the store. Her familiarity with the store and products can give her a sense of control. Her preference for the store and the products has also generated emotional support and attachment to the store. Therefore, ASDA can be regarded as her 'extended self'. In addition, the recognition between Clare and the staff and the non-verbal communications between her and other customers in the store can enhance Clare's positive phenomenal self (individual self concept and group identity). Furthermore, she feels that customers in ASDA are her '*type*' of people. She feels comfortable when she shops there. In addition, she goes to ASDA with her Mum and her brother. Clare described that her family like ASDA and want to go shopping in ASDA. In addition, all her family like ASDA food. We can suggest that sharing of preference for ASDA food and the provision of ASDA food can be a means for Clare to communicate her recognition of ASDA as the family identity and express her relational self. It can be suggested that Clare can construct and maintain her self-identity at the individual, relational and collective levels. Thirdly, hedonically, she enjoys shopping in ASDA. She can get social support from the staff and other customers in the store. She generally feels comfortable and at ease in the store.

To sum up, Clare's choice of shopping in ASDA has been empowered by: (1) functional values (2) hedonic pleasures and (3) self-congruence between her and ASDA. It can be suggested that Clare's shopping in ASDA is a self-determined voluntary choice. On the one hand, the familiarity with the store can give her a sense of control and routine, which can generate a sense of security. However, on the other hand, routine shopping can also be the cause of boredom. Indeed, Clare described that she goes to ASDA and puts the same things in the trolley every week. Her mundane shopping activities have reduced the enjoyment of her shopping experiences in ASDA. Therefore, we can suggest that for Clare, there is incongruity in terms of hedonic needs and some experiential experiences in ASDA. The incongruity has urged her to seek some pleasure in grocery shopping. Thus, one solution for her is to shop in some other shops. In fact, this reflects the ambivalence between Clare's life-role task requirement and her hedonic needs. However, her relationship with ASDA has not really been undermined by her pleasure seeking in other supermarkets.

The conversation with Clare has also revealed her frustrations when she talked about her experiences in ASDA. One frustration is that she never buys much food from other stores partly because her family love ASDA food and partly because they are cheaper. For example, Clare talked about her brother who has to '*stick to*' the same thing. He has to get the same dog food from ASDA. Indeed, the relational factor has become external constraints for Clare's grocery shopping activities. Therefore, she always goes back to ASDA. We can therefore see the paradox for Clare. On the one hand, ASDA has the functional values and symbolic meanings. She feels it is the store where she can get support for her life-role task fulfilling and also self-identity maintenance. On the other hand, she likes 'trying different things' (disposition associated with grocery shopping). Thus, temptations of the alternatives (different stores and different products) are always there. She tries to decrease the temptations of other supermarkets by reducing their attractions to her cognitively. In the mean time, ASDA has proved to be attractive to her persistently. However, she has had some negative experiences there. For example, she described that if she goes late in the day, it is hard to do the shopping because many items are not available. In addition, the store moves things around quite frequently. However, she has shown her tolerance and compromise for these negative attributes of the store by adapting her own shopping time to overcome these. In the mean time, cognitively, she attempts to attribute the negative attributes of ASDA to common features shared by all supermarkets. Her relationship with ASDA can be termed as 'kinship', which is a voluntary union.

Another store where Clare shops is ALDI. ALDI is a place where she can get something different. As described above, she gets bored by '*putting the same thing in the trolley every week*' in ASDA. It is therefore tempting for her to try something different and gets some fun by shopping somewhere different. In addition, her daughter likes to try different things as well. Therefore, under her financial constraints, she can see and try different things by shopping in ALDI. In addition, she also receives fliers from ALDI, which displays all the special offers, which is the reason for Clare to shop in ALDI. In addition, ALDI also provides products different from what she can get from ASDA. Thus, we can suggest that functionally, ALDI provides Clare with cheap and different products. Hedonically, Clare enjoys shopping in ALDI by browsing and purchasing different products and buying bargains. However, the product variety at the store does not allow her to conduct her whole weekly shopping. Indeed, she described that her shopping in ALDI results in her purchasing a lot of unnecessary things and not accomplishing the main shopping tasks. Thus we can suggest that her shopping experiences can reflect the ambivalence of carrying out grocery shopping tasks and fun seeking. For Clare, the priority should be the main grocery-shopping task. In ALDI, she feels that she fails to achieve that. In addition, 'buying too much' is also consequence associated with shopping in ALDI. We can suggest that Clare regards her shopping activities as displaying the 'negative self' in terms of her life role tasks. Thus, Clare goes to ALDI only every few months.

Clare also described that she does not really feel comfortable in ALDI in terms of the store environment and other customers. The store environment is not what she likes. Other customers are not her type of people ('scruffy') and she tries to avoid talking to them. Therefore, we can see that symbolically and experientially, ALDI is not her 'place' and 'space'. Thus Clare emphasised that in ALDI, she concentrates more on products. Indeed, for Clare, ALDI is a place, which represents the ambivalence between functional, hedonic and expressive meanings. It can be suggested that ALDI is a 'casual friend'.

M&S is another store where Clare shops. M&S is the store for Clare to purchase food for special occasions (such as birthdays, Christmas, and dinner parties). Bits of food from M&S will be displayed on these special occasions, especially when friends and other relatives are visiting her for dinners. Clare has expresses her wish to buy more food from M&S if she had more money. M&S brand can represent her 'hoped for' self (her aspiration). In addition, from Clare description, it can be suggested that she is a person with relatively 'high self-monitoring'. Indeed, we can suggest that the motivations underlying her purchase of M&S food can be: (1) social comparison and social identification with her aspirational reference group (2) social conformity and social approval and (3) a way to express her love for her family and friends. Indeed, M&S products can represent her 'presenting self'. For Clare, the meanings of M&S store and its products are more significant in the consumption stage.

In the store, Clare described that she would look at every thing in the store. Hedonically, we can suggest that Clare can get some fun and sensory stimulations by browsing the products. However, her subjective experiences in M&S are not very positive. For example, other customers in M&S are from a different group. Indeed, she does not think that she belongs to the group of customers in M&S. In order to achieve social conformity, she has to dress up when she shops there. In addition, the self regard Clare received from other customers is not high and positive. The staff service she experienced in the store indicates that staff in the store is not '*bothered with*' her. Even though she tried to attribute these to individual staff's attitude and behaviour, her descriptions indicate that she was not treated well in M&S. Her experiences implied that she does not feel that she get much acceptance and recognition in the store. Clearly there is incongruence between positive personal self (ideal, possible self) and the negative self (social and phenomenal self) in the store. There is also incongruence between her phenomenal self and her subjective experiences. This has resulted in the incongruence between the personal self (own point of view) and the public/phenomenal self (other point of view). Due to the need for positive self regard (self esteem), Clare therefore always tries to avoid the store. However, due to the need for aspiration and fantasy/daydreaming from the products (possible self), she feels that she is attracted to the store. In addition, her relationship with M&S can be categorised as 'voluntary' and termed 'compartmentalised' (See description in Table 9.3)

From Clare experiences, we can suggest that she has developed various kinds of relationships with stores (ranging from 'kinship', 'best friend' and 'casual friend' to 'compartmentalised'). Indeed, her relationships with stores are determined by the meanings she can derive from her interactions with stores. In addition, her store constellations can function as a system to allow her to cope with various ambivalences in terms of meanings and motivations for grocery shopping.

11.2 Case 2: Helen's story

Helen is in her forties. She lives with her husband and two young daughters (aged 7 and 9). Helen's description has revealed that Helen is ok in terms of financial situation. Money is not too tight for her. However, she has to cope with various life role tasks such as working and studying, looking after children, conducting grocery shopping and cooking. Indeed, we can suggest that Helen has a very ‘hectic’ life style.

Helen’s Grocery Store Relationship Portfolios

Helen has been shopping in ASDA for over ten years. She started to shop in ASDA when she undertook the grocery shopping tasks in her household. ASDA is the supermarket close to where she lives. Indeed, for Helen, the reason for her to shop in ASDA is totally the functional reasons. ASDA’s opening times allows her to conduct grocery shopping after she finished her work at night. However, due to her waiting for ASDA staff re-shelving products, it was always midnight after her shopping. In addition, she had to deal with the piles of groceries after her shopping after midnight. Thus, physically it was hard for her to manage it. Therefore, it can be suggested that functionally ASDA store could not fully support her grocery shopping. Thus Helen switched to Morrison’s for her shopping. However, recently, because of time pressure, she can only do the shopping in the evenings. Thus, she had to switch back to ASDA. It is obvious that Helen lives a really ‘hectic’ life. She has to fit every task into her schedule. Functional attributes (such as location, opening time and product variety) of stores are really crucial for her to carry out the grocery shopping tasks.

Helen likes buying things and looking at things. In ASDA, the wide variety of products can become a distraction for her because she looks at things and buys things she does not need. Helen’s description of her shopping experiences suggests that she has a feeling of guilt over her shopping behaviour at ASDA. Indeed, she can get some fun but she also has to face her negative self (‘disposition’ in respect of shopping) when she shops at ASDA. Therefore, on the one hand, ASDA can support her shopping tasks functionally and hedonically. On the other hand, she has to encounter the ambivalence between (1) 'work' and 'fun' and (2) her life role task fulfilment and her negative self. In fact, she always tries to avoid the store (ASDA). She does not shop in ASDA for her routine weekly shopping. She goes to ASDA for Christmas and birthdays parties when she needs wider varieties. She always rushes to finish her shopping, which results in her not being able to have her whole shopping done because she always forgets to purchase certain products. In addition, the store atmosphere in the store can be very chaotic. Thus, we can suggest that ASDA cannot support her functionally and hedonically.

The interview also revealed that that for Helen cannot achieve her self and identity construction (both at individual level and group level). For example, customers in the store (ASDA) are not her type of people in terms of their appearance and their behaviour (especially the children). There is incongruity between her actual self and her situational/phenomenal self in the store. Helen always buys manufacturers' branded products in ASDA. In fact, when ASDA own branded products (such as the costume jewellery for gifts) are purchased, the packages/boxes have to be changed in disguise to avoid the display of ASDA brands. Therefore, it can be suggested that ASDA brands cannot represent her self concept ('presenting' self).

Helen goes to ASDA only for its functional meanings because she has to cope with various external constraints for her grocery shopping. Therefore the relationship is not voluntary and can be termed as a 'marriage of convenience'.

Helen shops more in Morrison's than in ASDA. Indeed, it is the closest store to where she lives. For her, Morrison's is more compact with fewer distractions. Functionally, it is better for her routine shopping. However, customers in Morrison's are not her group in terms of age, social status, and appearance. In addition, store atmosphere in

Morrison's can also be chaotic. Indeed, it is hard for Helen to conduct her shopping in a comfortable and relaxing mood. In fact, the reasons for shopping at Morrison's are its functional values, which are crucial for Helen to cope with her grocery shopping under various external constraints. Therefore the relationship is not voluntary and can be termed as a 'marriage of convenience'.

By the time the researcher conducted the interview, Helen has shopped at TESCO for only a short period of time. However, her relationship with the TESCO store in Carnforth can be termed 'a committed partnership'. Functionally, her shopping in TESCO is easier because of various functional supports (such as store layout, product quality, variety of products and the staff). For example, the wide variety of products can enable her to get everything she needs for her weekly shopping. In addition, the quality of food can guarantee that she can plan and conduct her one-stop weekly shopping there. In addition, the store is clean and the aisles are wide. She can do her shopping quickly. In addition, staff at the checkout always helps her with her packing. Hedonically, she feels that the store can be 'personal' for her. Indeed, the staff are nice and try to build connections with her. She is always recognised and served by the same staff. In fact, she feels that staff genuinely values her as a customer. In addition, she can meet her friends and she always has a chat with them. For Helen, customers at TESCO are similar to her in terms of their age, status, appearance and behaviour. Therefore, she can derive social identification and self-categorization with these customers (in-group members). Symbolically, she can construct her self concept at both the individual and group level. Helen's feeling of being able to be her self and her affiliating with the group bring about very positive shopping experiences. Helen has described her shopping experiences at TESCO can be described as 'being comfortable', 'feeling relaxed' and 'enjoying the calmer atmosphere'.

Expressively, TESCO provides support for her eco-friendly behaviour (such as reusing carrier bags). Helen has described that TESCO as a store tries to extend their connection with individual consumers but also the local community. Indeed, Helen has described that TESCO has displayed their good intentions for customers and local communities. She is happy to participate in many joint activities. For example, TESCO store has organised a Local Carers' Day and allowed local charities to collect donations at the store etc. It can be suggested that Helen thinks she can share values (in particular some 'universal values') with the store. Indeed, shopping at TESCO is a means for her to validate and materialise her values and beliefs. In the interview, Helen expressed her emotional affection and her feeling of belonging to the store. In addition, the loyalty card has become the sign for Helen's loyalty to the relationship. TESCO monitors her shopping and gives her vouchers for the things she needs through their Loyalty Schemes. She can feel the store genuinely care about customers. TESCO values her as a customer and also as a relationship partner. To sum up, TESCO can give Helen functional support, hedonic pleasure and self and identity support. Therefore, when her life circumstances cannot allow her to shop at TESCO, Helen has taken actions to continue the relationship by doing online shopping. Indeed, her actions indicate her 'commitment to continuity' of her relationship with TESCO. The relationship is an example of Voluntary Union. We suggest that the relationship between Helen and TESCO can be termed a 'committed partnership'.

Helen also shops in M&S for luxurious things (such as gifts, birthday-cakes and treats for her children). In terms of gifts, M&S brands and products are acceptable on special consumption occasions. Indeed, gifts from M&S can represent her presenting self, which indicates more social conformity and can bring about social approval. It can be suggested that purchasing products from M&S can be driven by external factors. M&S products entail symbolic meanings, which can be significant at the consumption stage. However, her subjective experiences at M&S store can be described as 'not feeling comfortable'. Indeed, staff in M&S is perceived to be snobbery. She feels that if she does not dress up, she will be treated badly by the staff in the store. She is very aware of herself in public. Because of her bad experiences in Boots, she believes that people judge you by your appearance. In M&S, she forms her (phenomenal) self concept by focusing more 'other point of view' (the staff and other customers). Indeed, she does not feel acceptance and positive self regard in the store. In addition, other customers in M&S tend to be older in terms of their age. It is not really her group of people. In M&S, Helen feels the incongruence between her actual self and the situational/phenomenal self. Because of the incongruence, she feels that she cannot get recognition, acceptance and self esteem from others.

To sum up, M&S can support her for her special consumption occasions functionally and symbolically. However, her motivations for consuming M&S products are environmentally sanctioned (social conformity and social approval). In addition, she feels she does not identify with the store. Indeed, she does not receive acceptance and positive self regard in the store. The relationship between Helen and M&S is not voluntary. The relationship can be termed as 'casual friends'.

From Clare's and Helen's experiences, we can suggest that two main themes have emerged: (1) consumers have to deal with ambivalence between various kinds of meanings of stores (such as functional, hedonic, and symbolic/expressive). Indeed, consumers' form a constellation of stores for their shopping and consumption as a way to cope with various kinds of ambivalence and (2) consumers have to face the ambivalence of various aspects and levels of self concept in stores and on consumption occasions. In addition, consumers' motivations and personality can affect the way in which consumers deal with these dilemmas. Consumers' motivations and personalities can also influence the effect of the ambivalence on their relationships with stores.

11.3 Store Constellations

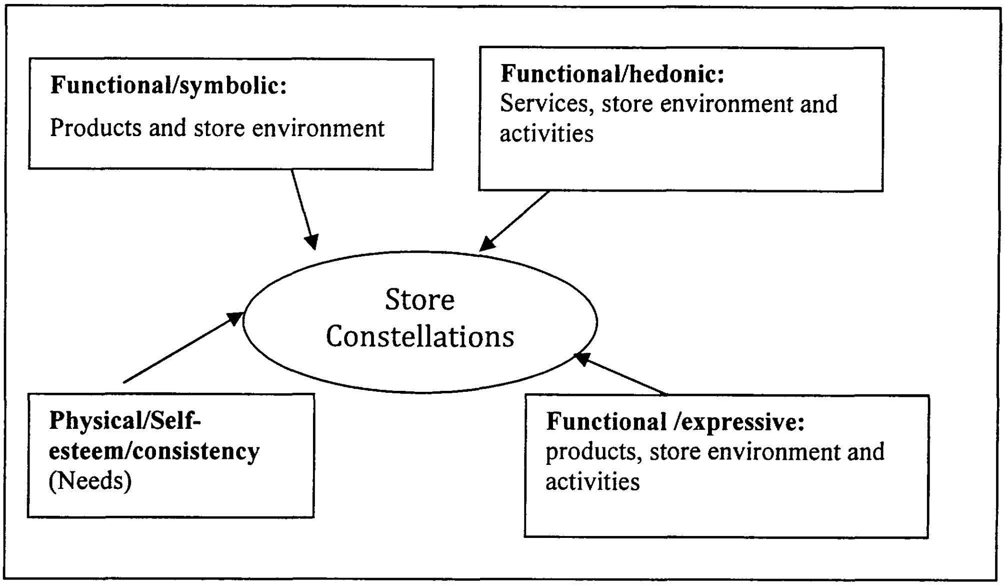
Consumption constellations across products and services have been explored in many studies (Levy 1964; Kernan and Sommers 1967; Green, et al, 1972, Solomon 1983; Solomon and Assael 1987; Kehret-Ward 1987; Solomon 1988, Solomon and Buchanan 1991). It has been argued that consumption constellations can be role related (Solomon and Assael 1987), meaning-based (Fournier, 1991) in particular linked with '*the creation, maintenance and enhancement of social identities*' (p. 551, Hogg and Mitchell, 1997). One theme that emerged in current research is the constellations of stores and product consumptions. Indeed, the analysis has revealed that participants have a set of grocery stores in which to do grocery shopping.

The findings have suggested that store constellations are primarily meaning-based. Firstly, the analysis has shown that a cluster of stores can represent complementary functional values. Indeed, these stores function together to meet consumers' functional needs for grocery shopping on different shopping and consumption occasions (mundane, special consumption occasions and emergency). Indeed, as discussed previously, consumption occasions can reflect the demands for the roles of participants associated with grocery shopping. These consumption occasions can also signify different grocery needs. Consumers need to shop in different stores for the requirements for groceries. Indeed, participants also play various roles associated with various consumption occasions. Therefore, in this sense, we can suggest that store constellations can also be regarded as role-related.

Secondly, store constellations can also represent complementary hedonic meanings consumers can derive from their shopping experiences in these stores (see discussion in Chapter 9). Thirdly, store constellations can reflect the complementary expressive values of products and stores for consumers. Indeed, we have discussed that products from different stores can represent different aspects of consumers' self concept (actual self, desired self and possible self and relational self). In addition, consumers can discover and experience various aspects of self concept in stores at different levels (personal, relational and collective) (see discussion in Chapter 10). In this sense, it can be suggested that store constellations can be linked with the creation, maintenance of self concept and also be a way for consumers to manipulate their experiences in order to fulfil their self-defining, self discovery and self fulfilment.

To sum up, we have discussed meanings of stores for participants in terms of products, services and (joint) activities. They are functional/symbolic, functional/expressive and functional/hedonic. In addition to these meanings, participants have their needs such as positive self regard and self consistency. We can suggest that there are four main forces driving participants' store constellations. Indeed, combinations of aspects of store meanings can determine the dynamics of store choices. In addition, congruence/incongruence between these aspects of meanings can also affect the nature of relationships (Figure 11.1).

Figure 11.1 Forces for Store Constellations



For example, from Clare store portfolios, we can see that Clare shops in corner shops, ASDA, ALDI and M&S. These stores can provide functional support for the needs for consumption occasions and shopping situations. Symbolically, these stores can represent different aspects (negative or positive) and different levels (individual, relational and collective) of self concept. Hedonically, these stores can give Clare different experiential experiences (positive and negative). In general, we can suggest that Clare strives to fulfil her life-role tasks and to seek some pleasure even from mundane grocery shopping. In addition, her experiences also revealed the need for self consistency and positive self regard. However, under many constraints, she cannot really make voluntary choices and she has to try to balance these needs and pursue these motivations by going to different stores. In her story, we can suggest that she has to encounter various kinds of ambivalence. This also affects her approach and avoidance behaviour, and finally her relationship with these stores. We have used Clare's store constellation portfolio and summarised the store meaning ambivalence, approach-avoidance behaviour and relationship types in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1 Store Meaning Ambivalence, Approach-Avoidance behaviour, Relationship Types

Store	Functional	Hedonic	Symbolic	Consumers' Needs	Approach/ avoidance	Relationship type
Corner shop	Economic (-) Convenient(+)	Personalizing (+) Self gratification (+)	Past self (+) Negative self (+)	Self esteem (+) Self consistency (+)	Approach/ avoidance	Best friend
ASDA	Economic (+) Familiarity and control (+) Convenient (+)	Personalizing (+) Social shopping (+) Role playing (+) Familiarity (+)	Extended self (+) Extant self (+) Relational self (+) Social identity(+)	Self-esteem (+) Self consistency (+)	approach	Best friend
ALDI	Economic (+)	Sensory stimulation (+) Value shopping (+) Role playing (+) Self gratification (+)	Extant self (-) Social identity (-)	Self consistency (-) Self esteem (-)	avoidance /approach	Casual friend
M&S		Personalizing (-) Role playing (+) Sensory stimulation (+) Self gratification (+)	Extant self (-) Social identity (-)	Self-esteem (+/-) Self consistency (-)	avoidance /approach	Casual friends

Indeed, from Clare's experiences, it can be suggested that Clare perceptions of store meanings vary from functional, symbolic, and hedonic to expressive. Firstly, it is obvious that Clare has to face various kinds of ambivalence between aspects of store meanings. Indeed, common ambivalence across all the cases is the ambivalence between consumers' life-role task requirements and their hedonic, symbolic and/or expressive needs. The ambivalence has been the resonant themes for working women

(Thompson, 1996). In the current research, participants regard and always put the life role tasks as their priority. Due to external pressures, they have to go to some stores for their functional supports such as ALDI for Clare even though they dislike these stores. Secondly, it is clear that Clare attempts to reconcile the ambivalence. This is another theme, which has been seen across the cases. Indeed, participants strive to reconcile their life role tasks, their hedonic and expressive needs. The attempt for this reconciliation can be demonstrated through participants' approach and avoidance behaviour to different stores. Indeed, participants' approach and avoidance behaviour has also resulted in different types of relationships (such as visiting frequency and closeness to stores). Thirdly, the analysis has also shown that stores can help participants to reconcile these ambivalences. Participants can develop long-term, emotion-laden relationships with these stores. For example, we have described the committed partnership between Helen and TESCO and the best friend relationship between Clare and ASDA. Indeed, the summary in Table 11.1 has displayed that the congruence/incongruence, reconciliation and un-reconciliation between various aspects of meanings and self-related motivations and needs can affect consumers' avoidance and approach behaviour for stores and consumers' relationships with stores.

Sirgy et al (2000) developed a conceptual model, which aims to integrate consumer-store congruity and retail patronage behaviour. Indeed, from the current research findings, we can suggest that Sirgy et al (2000) model can be extended in the following ways: (1) in addition to functional and self congruity, the research has identified 'hedonic congruity' as a factor affecting consumers' store behaviour; (2) in addition to consider in-store experiences, the research has demonstrated that in order to gain a holistic understanding of consumers' store behaviour, consumption stages need to be taken into account. By taking this approach, self-congruity dimensions extend to include the relational self and collective self in consumption stage and also elaborate the in-store self congruity by delineating it into personal self-congruity and collective-self congruity; (3) in addition to self congruity which emphasise the symbolic meanings of shopping and consumption, we suggest that self congruity can be further elaborated by including symbolic congruity and expressive congruity. This can be summarised in Figure 11. 2.

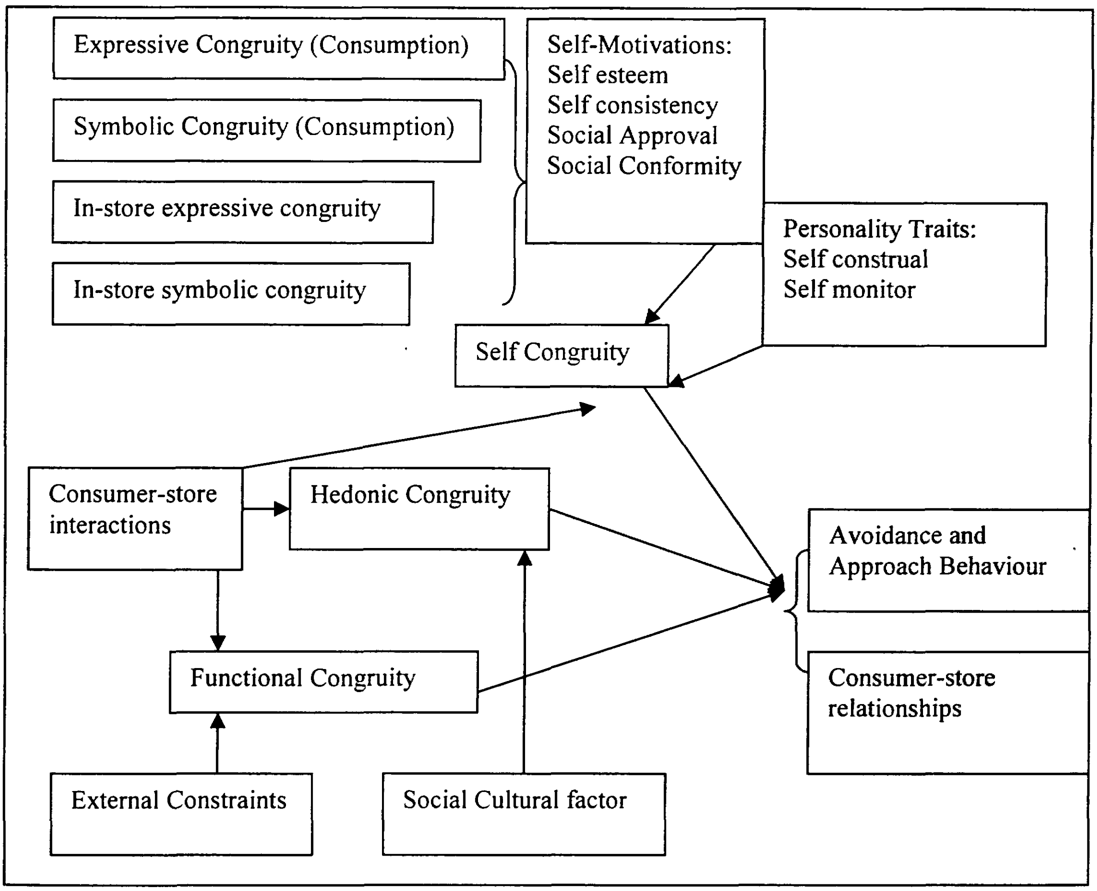


Figure 11.2: Integrative model of Consumer-store Congruity and Consumer-store Behaviour and Relationships

11.4 Self-Congruity and Store Relationships

It has been well documented in the literature that consumers attempt to match their self image with store image (Stern et al, 1977; Bellenger et al, 1976; Sirgy, et al, 2000). It was found that actual self image congruence was more important in terms of its affects on consumers' supermarket choices (e.g., Dornoff and Tatham, 1972). As illustrated previously, store constellations can be associated with the creation, maintenance and enhancement of participants' self and social identity. However, one theme that emerged is that consumers have to deal with the ambivalence in respect of various aspects and levels of self concept in stores and consumption occasions. These ambivalences can reflect various levels and aspect of self congruity and/or incongruity.

According to Higgins (1987), self-concept can be derived from 'own standpoint' and 'other standpoint' of self. Sirgy et al (2000) has developed the integrative self congruity model. In this model, the dimensions of self image include: (1) consumers' own point of view of their self concept ('actual self-image' and 'ideal self-image') and (2) consumers' perception of other point of view of their self concept ('social self-image' and 'ideal social self-image'). It can be argued that these dimensions can make sense when consumers can use the product and brand symbolism to project their self image (own point of view) and they can derive social self image from other people's reaction (accept/reject) to their projected self image. However, it can be argued that this model can be further elaborate in store contexts (see Figure 11.2).

Firstly, we have suggested that in order to understand consumers' shopping experiences, the investigation needs to extend to the consumption stages. Secondly, as discussed in Appendix 2, consumers can construct, maintain and experience various levels of self concept, in particularly related to relational level and collective level. Thus, it can be suggested that the dimensions of self image need to include various levels of self concept. Therefore, in store context, it can be suggested that the dimensions of self image for congruity include personal self (actual/own, actual/other, ideal/own, ideal/other) and collective self (actual /own, actual/other, ideal/own, ideal/other). In the consumption context, consumers can project their relational self through products. Therefore, the dimensions of self image include actual relational/own, actual relational/other, ideal relational/own and ideal relational/other. In Table 11.1 we have illustrated the dimensions of self image and self-congruity between consumer self image and store image.

Table 11.2 Self-Congruity

Self-Store Congruence	**Own standpoint**	**Other standpoint** **In-store**	**Consumption**
Positive self congruity (personal self) (e.g. Helen and TESCO)	Actual (+)	Actual (+)	Actual (+)
Negative self congruity (personal self) (e.g., Helen and ASDA)	Actual (-)	Actual (-)	NA
Positive self incongruity(personal self) (e.g., Helen and M&S)	Ideal (+)	Ideal (-)	
Positive self incongruity(personal self) (e.g., Helen and M&S)	Ideal (+)	Ideal (-)	Ideal (+)
Positive self congruity (group identity (e.g. Helen and TESCO)	Actual (+)	Actual (+)	
Negative self congruity (group identity) (e.g. Helen and ASDA)	Actual (-)	Actual (-)	
Positive self incongruity (group) (e.g. Clare and M&S)	Ideal (+)	Ideal (-)	Ideal (+)
Positive self incongruity (group) (e.g. Clare and M&S)	Ideal (+)		Ideal (+)
Positive relational self congruity (e.g., Clare and ASDA; Helen in TESCO)	Actual relational (+)	Actual (+)	(+)
Positive relational self congruity (e.g., Helen and M&S)	Ideal relational (+)	NA	Ideal (+)

We can suggest that there are three main referent points for participants to derive self congruity such as themselves (own standpoint), others in stores (other standpoint) and others in consumption (other standpoint). Thus, self congruity can be focused on (1) personal self and collective self in store contexts (2) personal self and relational self in consumption contexts. In addition, it has been argued that self-motives, personality and some situational factors can affect participants' attention to private, collective or relational self and standpoints (other or own standpoint) (See discussion in Chapter 5).

Indeed, these factors include individual's relational self construal and self monitor. We are now going to discuss how individuals' personality can affect self congruity and further store relationships.

11.5 Relational Self Construal and Self-Congruity

In terms of self congruity, one theme that emerged from the data is related to relational self congruity. Indeed, consumer/store relationships are embedded in the network of other social relationships. Therefore, the network of social relationships can affect consumers' relationships with stores. For individuals with high relational self construal, close relationships are essential for their self expression and self enhancement. Indeed, consumers can express their relational self in respect of shopping and consumption through: (1) sharing their family members' preferences for stores and products; (2) purchasing family member's favourite brands and products to express their love and care and (3) manifesting values and dispositions shared by family members by store and product choices. The store and the products therefore can become a symbol for people to communicate their shared values and attitudes to their significant others which can further enhance the bonds with their significant others. For individuals' with high relational self construal, it can be suggested that relational self congruity can be essential factors for their store relationship development.

11.6 Self Monitoring and Self Congruity

As discussed in Chapter 5, 'self monitoring' is a personality factor, which can affect the activation of individuals' self concept dimensions and also affect self constructing and self regulation. Indeed, it has been argued that people with high self monitoring will focus more on the 'other standpoint' to form self concept and use the situational sources from immediate environment to guide their cognition and behaviour (Snyder, 1987; Gonnerman, et al, 2000). In addition, people with high self monitoring will focus on the 'public self' at personal level (presenting self: being socially desirable, interpersonal compliance) and at group level (collective self: intragroup compliance). This has been termed as 'social approval motive' (Sirgy, et al, 2000). However, it has been suggested that people with low self monitoring will focus more on their 'own standpoint' or 'inner audience' to form their self concept (such as the internalised values and goals) rather than information from immediate environments. In addition, people with low self monitoring will focus on the 'private self' at the personal level (independent self, self-consistency) and the group level (conformity to in-group norms). This has been termed 'social consistency motive' (Sirgy, et al, 2000).

As discussed previously, self congruity/incongruity between consumers and stores can affect consumers' approach and avoidance store behaviour. In addition, it has been argued that four motives can affect consumers' approach and avoidance behaviour under situations of various aspects of self congruity and incongruity between consumers and stores. These motives include self esteem (positive self regard: feedback from others), self-consistency, social approval and social consistency/conformity (Sirgy, et al, 2000). Indeed, the analysis has shown that for participants' with high or low self monitoring, the dimensions of the self concept can be activated and different dimensions of self congruity can be generated. More importantly, participants' self motives can be activated in these situations. It can further affect their approach and avoidance to the stores.

For example, we have discussed Helen's experiences in Boots and M&S. Helen believes that staff in stores can judge people by their appearances. From Helen's experiences, we can suggest that she is very aware of other people (customers and staff) in the store contexts. She thinks people judge others by what they wear and how they look. In addition, Helen always attempts to achieve social conformity by purchasing acceptable gifts. In addition, she always dresses up when she goes to M&S because of the pressure of social approval. Therefore, in M&S, she is more concerned about 'other' point of view of self concept and the group level of self concept. We can suggest that Helen is a person with relatively high self monitoring. Indeed, the underlying motivations of social conformity and social approval are the need for self esteem, recognition, acceptance and social identifications. However, in these stores, her description indicates that she cannot keep her self consistency and she cannot achieve self esteem. It can be suggested that there are clearly conflicts for people with high self monitoring. In addition, for individuals' with high 'self monitoring', 'other standpoint' is the information they seek for their self concept. Indeed, they possibly receive negative feedback for their self appraisal from the staff or from other customers. However, using the source of other people's feedback as the reference for self concept, they could not feel the positive self regard and social approval. For example, Clare does not feel very comfortable in M&S because she feels that other customers are different and she does not feel that staff treats her well. It is their experiences in the store. Therefore, they have a tendency to avoid the stores.

In the consumption situation, products from the stores (such as M&S for Clare) can represent consumers' ideal self and therefore, they can use these products (M&S for Clare) for their presenting self. Indeed, consumers can obtain self esteem and social approval for consuming these products on these special occasions. We can see the conflict here. From Clare experiences, we can suggest that on the one side, Clare tries to avoid the store but on the other hand, she strives to shop more in M&S. In terms of the 'ideal self', using their own reference framework, participants can have a positive ideal self from participants' 'own standpoint'. This theme emerged in many participants' interviews. We can see the struggle between consumers' positive ideal self (in consumption phase) and the negative phenomenal self and social identity in the store contexts.

It can be suggested that the nature of consumer/store relationships also depends on the relationship is driven by consumers' internal self motivations or external pressures. For example, for Clare, M&S is their ideal self and also their possible ('hoped for') self. The possible self can represent their aspiration and their future self. Indeed, she goes to M&S for these internal motivations and aspirations. The relationship they developed with M&S is termed as 'compartmentalised friendship' (see Chapter 9). However, for some participants, M&S products and brand can represent their ideal self but can also be associated with 'social approval' and 'social conformity' motivations. External pressures can intensify these motivations. For example, Helen goes to M&S for some gifts, which she thinks are acceptable for special consumption occasions. Thus, the relationship between Helen and M&S can be categorised as 'casual friend'. To sum up, consumers can construct multilevel self concept such as personal; relational and collective (group) levels in shopping and consumption processes. Moreover, we have also revealed that the symbolic/expressive meanings of stores are not only limited in the store contexts, products from stores can have significant meanings for consumers self concept in the consumption stages. Therefore, in order to understand the effect of self congruity on consumers-store relationships, we suggest that we can extend Sirgy et al (2000) self congruity model: (1) by considering relational self and collective self; (2) by considering consumers' experiences in both store and consumption stages.

Chapter Summary:

From Clare and Helen's cases, we can suggest that participants have a store constellation formed by the reconciliation of the functional, hedonic, symbolic and expressive meanings derived from their experiences in stores and consumption contexts. Factors influencing the salience and importance of these meanings have also been explored such as self-motives (self-esteem, self consistency, social approval and social consistency) and personality (such as self monitor and self construal). These self motives can affect participants' approach and avoidance behaviour and further their relationships with stores. We have also further extended Sirgy, et al's (2000) self/store congruity model by considering relational and collective level of self concept and also by considering both shopping and consumption stages of consumers' experiences.

CHAPTER 12

CASE STUDY 2: VALUE CONGRUENCE AND STORE RELATIONSHIPS

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the cases of two participants. The two participants have shared similar grocery shopping experiences and also developed relationships with stores with similar characteristics. In addition, their cases have reflected many of the themes seen across the broad range of cases, discussed in the earlier chapters. Indeed, further to extensive discussion of the 'characteristics of relationships' and the 'developmental stages of relationships' presented in Chapters 9 and 10, the focus of this chapter moves towards discussing how consumer/store value congruence can affect relationship commitment. In addition, the mediating role of dimensions of relationships (such as trust, interdependence, attraction and intimacy) between value congruence and relationship commitment was also explored. This chapter will also discuss how consumers' trust can affect their perceptions of RM strategies especially with respect to stores' customer care and loyalty programmes.

12.1 Case 1: Barbara's Story

Barbara, in her late forties, lives in a semi-detached house with her husband and two younger daughters. She works part-time. From her experiences, we can suggest that time and financial factors are not constraints for her grocery shopping.

Barbara's Store Relationship Portfolios

Barbara has been shopping in Booths for 14 years since they moved there. She goes to Booths every week to get her main groceries. At the functional level, Booths is the nearest shop for her. Indeed, the location means convenience. In addition, the car parking facility also makes Barbara's shopping easier. Moreover, the size of the store is convenient for her because she can get everything quickly and easily. Hence, all these functional attributes can support her in conducting her weekly grocery shopping.

Barbara enjoys shopping in Booths. For her, the shop is local and therefore she can always meet people she knows and have a good chat with them. Moreover, she knows several staff working at the tills and this gives her 'exchange feel'. She also knows the staff on the cold meat counter. She always has a conversation with them. In this sense, she feels Booths is more 'personal' for her than other supermarkets. Indeed, this kind of connection with other people is very important because for her, '*with the development of technology, organisations are 'cutting people out' and this may bring about mental problems because we are really social*'. Thus, it can be suggested that the main pleasures she can experience in Booths can be associated with the 'personalizing' experiences.

In addition, Booths is her local corner shop. She feels that the store cares for customers and she appreciates their efforts for customers. For example, Booths tries to make use of the limited space and provides best product variety. Indeed, what impressed her is the beer collection, which can give customers the best and cheapest bottled beer. She also sees staff constantly re-stocking and it is very rare for consumers to face the 'out of stock' situation. She has also witnessed how the staff cared and helped a customer who suffers from dementia. Therefore, she can trust Booths because it cares about customers.

With regard to symbolic meanings, Booths can bring back memories from her past. She described that when she was a little girl, there were a lot of corner shops. In her memory, shopping meant *'going to the butcher's to get meat, to the Grocer's for* *vegetables and to the Baker's for bread'*. In Booths, the cold meat counter and the cheese counter remind her of the traditional butcher's. She clearly indicated that these counters can represent her past self. In addition, she likes the small shops. The store layout and store size in Booths can reflect her preference and her disposition (taste).

From the interview, we can suggest that Barbara is a lady who cares about her values and beliefs. For example, she thinks she should do things for local people and support British farmers. Therefore, she always buys British meat and seasonal locally produced vegetables partly because of her connections with farmers. Her father-in-law and brother-in-law are farmers. Thus, she knows the difficulties farmers have to face. Indeed, Booths sells local produces (such as meat and vegetables). For her, Booths' conducts can express their concern for the interest of local people and local farmers. Thus, she feels that she shares some values with the Booths store. Indeed, this makes Barbara feel that Booths is more personal because it can share and support her personal values. She feels personally connected with it. In addition, Booths' activities can express their concern for the interest of other people and thus can reflect their good intentions. Due to her perceptions in terms of Booths' caring customers and good intentions, Barbara has developed trust in Booths. Thus, Barbara is not concerned with the cost and the time for conducting her grocery shopping. She can make her voluntary store choices in terms of which store she wants to shop. Indeed, she goes to Booths and pays a premium price to buy local products.

Another shop Barbara visits quite frequently is ALDI. ALDI is the shop that she has been shopping since it was opened. The products she purchases from the store including a wide variety from computer, camera to flowers and face cream. On special days such as Christmas, she also buys products such as Christmas cakes and Christmas puddings from ALDI. In addition, she thinks some products she purchased from ALDI can be better than products from M&S. From her descriptions, we can suggest that she does not have financial constraints for her grocery shopping. However, she has emphasised 'good value for money' as ALDI store's attribute. Thus, it can be suggested that for Barbara, value for money is more 'expressive' than 'utilitarian' (functional). In addition, her husband also likes getting bargains. Indeed, we can suggest that she and her husband share the virtue of 'being thrifty'. Barbara described that her family are not 'fussy about' brands and have been using the products from ALDI since they could remember. Therefore, we can suggest that ALDI is the brand and store, which are accepted and shared by her family members. Therefore, it can be suggested that ALDI can represent her relational self and family identity.

From her description, it can be suggested that she accepts the store environment in ALDI. Indeed, the store is clean and the store size is small. The store size also reflects her preference and taste for the store design. Thus, we can suggest that ALDI can represent her personal self concept (taste and disposition). Thus, the store environment of ALDI has symbolic values for her.

The location of ALDI is just opposite where she used to live when she was a child. Indeed, Barbara believes that the majority of people who shop in ALDI live in the area. Indeed, the store can represent her geographical identity. Thus, it can be suggested that ALDI can represent her past self. Indeed, she chooses to shop in ALDI voluntarily. The relationship between her and ALDI can be described as 'voluntary' and 'enduring'. ALDI can be termed as her 'best friend'. There is therefore congruity in terms of self concept (actual self, relational self and collective self).

Another shop Barbara visits is Sainsbury's. Barbara used to shop in Sainsbury's very frequently when she lived close to the store. However, the visiting frequency has declined to once or twice a month. Indeed, only when she receives vouchers from Sainsbury's does she shops there now. Thus, it can be suggested that values of Sainsbury's are utilitarian and instrumental.

Barbara has described her negative experiences of store environments, which have made her shopping task difficult. Indeed, her experiences have been caused by Sainsbury's changing layout (such as higher shelves and no-break aisles), moving things around, very frequent out-of-stock and the poor floor staff service. Indeed, she draws the conclusion that the store does not care about customers, based on her inferences and attributions of the store's attributes. In addition, her inferences of the negative shopping experiences also bring about her distrust of the store. Indeed, her distrust of Sainsbury's has also caused her negative perceptions of the store's other activities and strategies. For example, for Barbara, Sainsbury's relationship marketing strategies (such as her birthday vouchers and other vouchers) are just tools to draw consumers in the store. In addition, she is sceptical about Sainsbury's motivation and intention for their expansion of the store. Barbara is also cynical about Sainsbury's label in respect of the 'Country of Origin' of meat products. Indeed, Sainsbury's claims that the meat product is sourced locally. However, Barbara is cynical about Sainsbury's claims of 'Country of Origin' of meat products. She does not think they are honest in respect of their claims.

In addition, Barbara does not like Sainsbury's store environments. Thus, it can be suggested that store attributes in Sainsbury's do not reflect her taste. She is not really aware of other customers who shop in the store. It can be suggested that she cannot get much positive symbolic meanings from this store. Experientially, she does not feel that she can have control of the store because she does not shop there often enough and she is not familiar with it. Moreover, from her experiences, Sainsbury's constantly changing the layout and moving things around makes her feeling of not-being-in-control more severe. In addition, she cannot recognise the people at the checkout. She has no conversation with people in the store. The store is impersonal for her. For Barbara, the relationship with Sainsbury's is functional. She shops in the store to get some free vouchers. She has low affection and intimacy and low trust in the store. Her relationship with Sainsbury's is characterised by sporadic visiting. It can be termed as 'casual friends'.

12.2 Case 2: Vera's Story

Vera is in her fifties. She lives with her husband and son. She is a retired social worker. Her husband is a professor at University. Vera has no financial constraints for her grocery shopping.

Vera's Store Relationship Portfolios

Vera used to shop in ASDA when her children were younger. At that time, she had to pay a mortgage. She had a relatively big family (four people). She cooked a lot of family meals and she needed more groceries. For her, shopping in ASDA could represent the economic side of her grocery shopping. ASDA had supported her grocery shopping and life role tasks functionally at that time. Indeed, she has more things and more roles when her family were young. For Vera, ASDA could provide functional support. However, recently, she revisited ASDA and bought some wine for the 'value for money'. From her description, the store has not invested money in improving store environments for many years. In addition, she described that the quality of the wine was 'appalling'. The people there were not her type of people. Thus, she did not feel comfortable when she shopped there. She would never go back again. From her experiences, we can suggest that ASDA was her past friend.

However, now it cannot give her any meanings. If it can, they are all negative experiences.

Vera shops regularly in Booths, which is the closest store to her house. From her description, Booths is a much smaller supermarket. However, she can get everything she needs from Booths. Indeed, her family structure has changed and she does not need as many groceries as before because she cooks family meals less frequently and she eats out more and she gets more takeaways. In addition, she feels that she likes to shop in smaller shops, which she can handle better. The car parking also makes her shopping easier. Vera can get functional support from Booths for her life role tasks. Even though it is not cheaper to shop in Booths, she has no financial constraints for her shopping.

She enjoys shopping in Booths. Booths is Vera's local shop. After years of shopping at Booths, she knows the staff working at the checkout, the cold meat counter and the cheese counter. Indeed, she can have a chat with people in Booths. She can also meet people she knows as well especially people from university, which can also give her a sense of connectiveness. Indeed Vera can get 'social support' from staff and other customers, which is important for her.

In addition, for her, it is nice that Booths has the cold meat counter and cheese counter, which remind her of the past. She vividly described the way her Mum shopped when she was younger. In Booths, through the interactions with the staff, she feels that she has a connected, personal and intimate, family feeling of the store.

Additionally, Booths sells local products, which is a value she shares with the store. She thinks that she also shares beliefs and values with other consumers (such as being 'green'-being environmental friendly). Therefore, it can be suggested that in addition to social support, Booths also gives her personality, self concept and identity (group) support. For Vera, her relationship with Booths is a voluntary union. She can derive functional support, social support, and expressive meanings from the store.

She feels intimate toward the store. However, Vera does not trust Booths. For example, she has complained about the overpriced lamb. She does not think that the locally sourced lamb should be that expensive. We can therefore suggest that Vera is sceptical about Booths' conducts. Thus, from her inferences, she does not think the store is honest.

From the analysis of Barbara's and Vera's store portfolio, we can suggest that without many external constraints, consumers have more freedom for grocery shopping in terms of what to buy and where to buy it. Clearly, consumers can express their concerns, values and beliefs through their store and product choices. Indeed, some consumers regard values and principles, which can be expressed through store and product choice, more important than utilitarian utility when they choose where to shop and what to buy. We can also suggest that consumes can also be aware of the values that stores express and communicate with consumers through retailers' conducts. Indeed, consumers can develop trust in and distrust of certain stores based on their inferences of stores intentions and motivations for consumers' interest and public interest in general. The analysis of Vera and Barbara's shopping experiences can suggest that value-congruence can affect the development of trust/distrust between consumers and stores.

12.3 Value Congruence and Consumer/Store Relationships

Extant literature has shown that values can affect consumers' brand relationships and behaviours. For example, at the brand level, values (utilitarian and hedonic) can affect brand loyalty (purchase and attitudinal) mediated by brand trust and brand affects (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Brand purchase value (affect, symbolic and trade-off) can also affect brand repurchase intention (Tsai, 2005).

One theme emerged from the analysis is that value congruence can affect various dimensions of relationship quality (such as attraction, interdependence, trust and intimacy). Consistent with prior research (e.g.,Meglino and Ravlin, 1998; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992), we have defined *values* as general beliefs about the importance of conduct or end-states of existence which are personally or socially desirable (see Chapter 4, p. 60). Indeed, in grocery shopping contexts, values identified include: utilitarian (functional and hedonic values) and symbolic and expressive values. In addition, the analysis has also shown that these values can generate can affect consumer store behaviours and meaning-based consumer/store relationships meanings and these meanings.

Value Congruence and Attraction

Value congruence can be derived from three dimensions: (1) functional, (2) hedonic and (3) symbolic/expressive. Indeed, value congruence can generate attraction between consumers and stores. The attraction generated from functional and hedonic value congruence has been discussed in detail in 10.1.3 'Affiliation' section. It can be suggested that there is direct association between similarity and attraction. One aspect of similarity is referred to as the similarity in terms of values, beliefs and attitudes. We have discussed (10.3.1.b Factors Enhancing the Initial Attraction) that interactions with similar others can affirm one's values, beliefs and attitudes. Indeed, at the individual level, these similarities can support individuals' self concept. In addition, at the group level, these similarities can enhance consumers' social identification with in-group member through self–categorization. Therefore, these interactions can be pleasurable and can generate positive feelings when the 'other' is perceived as a source of affirmation of self concept (e.g., Byrne, 1977; Newcomb, 1956; Duck, 1977). Indeed, it can be suggested that consumers can confirm their self concept by sharing their values and beliefs with stores and other customers. These aspects of value congruence can enhance the attractiveness of stores for consumers.

Value Congruence and Interdependence

We have discussed (9.2 Relationship as Interdependence) that there are three levels of interdependence between consumers and stores (such as functional, experiential and expressive). Indeed, these three types interdependence are derived from three dimensions of value congruence. We can suggest that value congruence can further enhance interdependence between consumers and stores. Therefore, it can be suggested that the higher the value congruence between store and participants the higher the interdependence between store and participants.

Value Congruence and Intimacy

The analysis has shown that value congruence can increase intimacy between consumers and stores. Firstly, value congruence between stores and participants can enhance their communication (10.2.1Communications and Intimacy). Communication here refers to the exchange of information through interactions between stores and customers. Value congruence can enhance communication by making the verbal and nonverbal signals' encoding and decoding easier (Wiener, et al, 1972; Edwards and Cable, 2005). Secondly, it is also confirmed that interpersonal similarity can enhance the frequency and quality of communication (e.g., Smith, et al, 1994; Swann, et al, 2004; Triandis, 1989; Williams and O'Reilly, 1998; Zenger and Lawrence, 1989). It has been suggested that value congruence in terms of values and beliefs can enhance the sense of similarity between consumers and the stores. Thus, values congruence in respect to these aspects can increase the communication quality between consumers and stores, which can subsequently enhance the development of intimacy. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 10, value congruence can enhance the development of 'companionate love' by sharing the values and beliefs between (1) consumers and stores and (2) consumers and other customers.

Value Congruence and Trust

The themes that emerged from the data can support the notion that value congruence can enhance participants' trust in organisations (Edward and Cable, 2009). As discussed in Chapter 10, three factors can enhance the development of trust between consumers and stores: (1) predictability, (2) dependability/capability and (3) faith (intentionality). We have discussed how consumers' perception of predictability and dependability of their shopping outcomes can affect consumers' trust in stores. More importantly, we have discussed participants' perceptions of stores' 'intentionality' can fundamentally affect consumers' trust in stores. Intentionality here is referred to as consumers' evaluation of stores' motivations for caring about the interests of customers' (Doney and Cannon, 1997). This is the main theme, which has been described by many participants in terms of stores' operations and conducts (See discussion 10.3.5 Trust). Indeed, it can be suggested that stores' motivations for caring consumers can also reflect their benevolence values (such as 'helpful', 'responsible', and 'honest'). These values are significant for customers in the grocery shopping context (Shaw et al, 2005). Indeed, in line with the interpersonal relationship research with respect to value congruence and trust (Christiansen, et al, 1997; Enz, 1988; Lau, et al, 2007; Edwards and Cable, 2009), current research findings can suggest that benevolence value congruence can enhance trust (see discussion in 10.3.5 Trust and two case analyses in 12.1 and 12.2).

Indeed, intentionality can also be manifested from the stores' conducts, which can demonstrate the attributes such as 'honesty' and 'responsibility' for broader issues. Indeed, it can be suggested that it is another aspect of intentionality. Participants are always concerned about stores' activities and their motivations, which can reflect their real engagement and concern or just serve lip service for broader issues (such as environmental, animal welfare, and supporting local people). The analysis has suggested that participants can increase their trust towards stores if these stores intentionally engage in actions, which can reflect 'universal values'. These universal values have been referred to as '*understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature*' (Schwartz, 1992, p.12). Research has shown that 'Universal value' is also one dimension of values which consumers give high regard (Shaw et al, 2005). Universal values emphasized by participants in this research are: 'protecting the environment'; 'animal welfare' and 'social justice'. The analysis has shown that universal value congruence between participants and stores also increases participants' trust towards these stores. Research on trust has also revealed that when people share similar values, they are likely to develop trust (e.g., Elangovan and Shapiro, 1998; Jones and George, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995; McAllister, 1995; Sitkin and Roth, 1993; Williams, 2001; Edwards and Cable, 2009).

We have illustrated that value congruence can enhance various relationship dimensions (such as attraction, interdependence, intimacy and trust between consumers and stores). We have also discussed (in Chapter 10) that these relationship dimensions can maintain and sustain consumer/store relationships. It has been argued that commitment is one indicator for the maintenance of the long-term relationship.

The research has shown that various aspects of relationship dimensions can lead to different types of relationships and different forms of relationships. Different types and forms of relationships can lead to different types of commitment such as commitment to content/commitment to continuity, exogenous/endogenous commitment. Thus, it can be suggested that there is associations between value congruence and relationship commitment and this association can mediated by various dimensions of relationship quality (See Figure 12.1).

12.4 Mediators between Value Congruence and Commitment

The research has shown that value congruence can lead to the development of various dimensions of consumer/store relationships (such as attraction, interdependence, intimacy and trust). These aspects of relationships can further bring about consumers' relationship commitment. In addition, these relationship dimensions can also mediate the relationship between consumer/store value congruence and relationship commitment.

Attraction and Commitment

As discussed in Chapter 10, at the initial stage of consumer/store relationships, consumers interact with stores and evaluate store attribute in terms of their own goals and values. The positive evaluations can generate consumers' 'liking' for stores. Indeed, attractions are associated with more functional meanings of stores. In addition, consumers can develop the given level of interdependence, which focuses more on the concrete outcomes (such as functional benefits, convenience, support for the life role tasks and control). Participants therefore develop type A relationships with stores. This type of interdependence can make the store attractive to participants. Commitment to content can also characterise this type of relationship. In addition, this type of commitment is very likely to be imposed by external pressures or constraints and thus can be termed 'exogenous' commitment. In addition, some relationships can stay at the 'attraction' stage and further develop into Type A relationship. However, for many relationships, attraction is the first stage of the development of consumer/store relationships. These relationships are very likely to develop into type B and type C relationships. These types of relationships can be characterised by 'commitment to content' and/or 'commitment to continuity'.

Interdependence and Commitment

We have discussed in Chapter 9 that in addition to 'functional' interdependence, consumer/store relationships can be characterised by 'experiential' and 'expressive' interdependence. These types of interdependence can lead to Type B and Type C relationships. For these types of consumer/store relationships, the affective bonds can range from 'affiliation, intimacy, self-concept, love' to 'self-identification, group identity, identification, love'. Type B and Type C relationships can involve 'commitment to content' and/or possibly 'commitment to continuity'. For example, Helen's commitment to TESCO store can be categorised as 'commitment to continuity'. She changed her shopping pattern (shopping online) to continue the relationship with TESCO. Commitment developed in Type B and Type C relationships can be regarded as 'endogenous' commitments. The drives for this type of commitment are from consumers' internal and self-determined factors (see discussion in Chapter 10). We can suggest that the type of interdependence between consumers and stores can determine the types of consumers' commitment to stores.

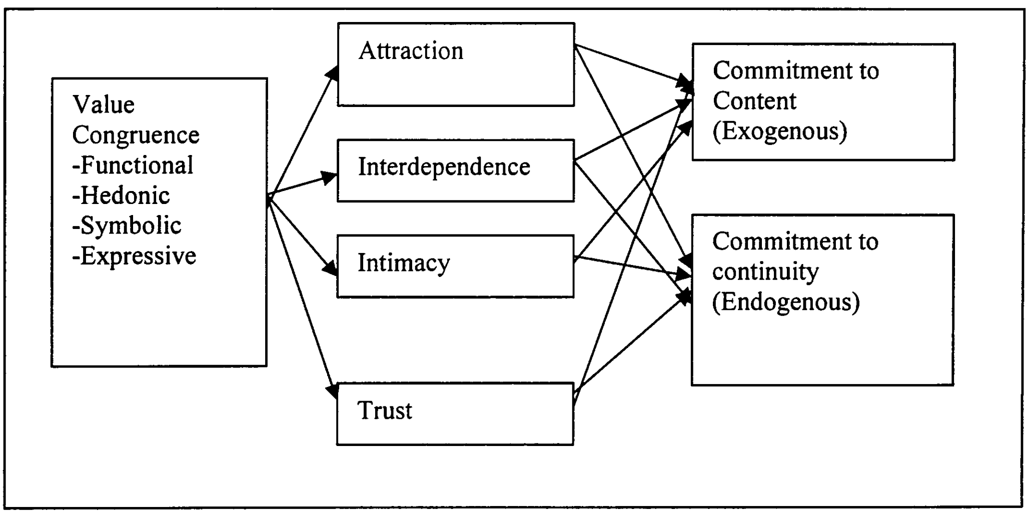
Trust and Commitment

The importance of trust in developing long-term commercial relationships have been emphasized repeatedly in the marketing literature (e.g., Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Geyskens et al, 1996). We have identified that predictability and intentionality are key factors for the development of consumers' trust in stores. Indeed, these essential elements of trust (such as the partners' reliability, honesty and benevolence) reflect the shared notions in social psychology and marketing literature in terms of trust (e.g., Larzelere and Huston, 1980; Rempel, et al, 1985). Indeed, the analysis has shown that consumers' trust in stores can enhance their commitment to stores. For example, Clare has been shopping in ASDA for over twenty years. The store always gives her value for money and helps her to maintain the shopping budget. She trusts ASDA because of its reliability. Despite some negative experiences, Clare adapts her shopping activities to keep the continuity of the relationship. Clare's commitment to ASDA can be categorised as 'endogenous' commitment. In addition to stores' benevolent intentions, consumers' trust for the stores' universal values (which are shared between participants and the store) can increase consumers' intrinsic motivation for commitment to stores and these intrinsic motivations can shift the commitment from 'content' to 'continuity'. For example, Helen shares many aspects of universal values with TESCO and she trusts the store. She changes her shopping activities to maintain the 'commitment to continuity' to the store.

Intimacy and Commitment

Intimacy indicates the closeness and affection between relationship partners. The drives for partner's commitment to the relationship can shift from being extrinsically motivated (external factors) to being more intrinsically motivated. For example, Barbara shops at Booths not only for functional benefits. Indeed, by sharing values with the store, Barbara feels Booths is personal for her and has generated affections value congruence can affect a partner's sense of intimacy of the relationships. Intimacy can become an affective factor to influence the type of commitment. To sum up, value congruence can affect the type of commitment, which can develop in consumer/store relationships. In addition, various aspects of relationship quality can mediate the effect of value congruence on commitments. This has been summarised in Figure 12.1.

Figure 12.1: Value Congruence and Relationship Commitment



12.5 Consumer Trust and Relationship Marketing

Values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, love and sociability are important for consumers (e.g., Bagozzi, 1995; O'Malley and Prothero, 2004; Shaw et al, 2005). The theme that emerged in the research is that consumers reward stores who demonstrate their values. Indeed, the research has also suggested that benevolent and universal values can earn participants' trust. In addition, consumers' trust can further affect their perceptions of store marketing tactics (including relationship marketing tactics). Indeed, relationship commitment and trust are key constructs for successful relationship marketing (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). These notions have been supported relationship marketing (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). These notions have been supported by the themes that emerged in this research.

Customer Care and Loyalty Programs

Customer care and loyalty programmes are important RM strategies for enhancing consumer relationships. The analysis has shown that effectiveness of these tactics depends on customers' perceptions of stores' motivations. The research has shown consumers' perceptions of stores' market mix and other strategies (such as Social Responsibility Programmes) can affect their inferences and attribution of stores' efforts and conducts, Indeed these perceptions can further affect their perceptions of stores' intentionality for consumers and other broad issues. As discussed previously, stores' intentionality for consumers can be crucial for the development of consumers' trust in stores. In addition, consumers' perceptions of stores' intentionality can in turn be affected by their trust in the stores. In addition, consumers' perceptions of stores' intentionality have spill over effect and can affect consumers' perceptions of stores' marketing efforts including their relationship marketing programmes. For example, as discussed previously, Helen perceives TESCO very positively in respect of their efforts for consumers (such as product quality and store environments). For her, TESCO cares customers and genuinely value her as a customer. Indeed, she perceives TESCO intentions for consumers very positively. Based on these inferences, she develops trust for TESCO. Her trust has further influenced her perceptions of TESCO's other marketing strategies. For example, when she talked about the RM tactics of TESCO, she believes that the TESCO store genuinely wanted to give something back to consumers. Indeed, she described that by monitoring her purchase activities, TESCO will be able to send her vouchers, which she is going to use to purchase some items she needs. Indeed, TESCO has treated her as an 'individual' personally rather than an 'anonymous' customer. Thus, it can be suggested that TESCO's relationship marketing tactics can represent the store's good intention to develop relationships with customers instead of a promotion tool.

> *Because they have the point system -the club card points, they send you a post every month. I get a statement of how many points I have and I can use the vouchers. They send me vouchers for various products and I can use them for various products. They tend to be products I use and not the products I don't use. I guess my club card... somehow they might be monitoring what I buy because all these vouchers are for the products I would buy and they offer me the vouchers for those products... They sort of, they seem to know what I would use. Probably all the vouchers they send to me I will use.*

Thus, it can be suggested that Helen really regards TESCO club card as a sign to represent the existence of her loyalty/relationship with TESCO.

> *You feel you have loyalty because you have the loyalty card.*

In terms of other TESCO store activities, Helen expressed her appreciation of the store's efforts to help the local community.

> *They had a stand at the back of the tills and they were advertising about carers. ...Sometimes they have the children collecting for charities ... so I think that kind of thing is nice because it sort of involved in the community as well and not just a big national store just taking from the community. They might like to give a little bit back.*

Indeed, we can suggest that Helen really believes TESCO's good intentions and her description indicates that she trusts TESCO. Therefore, TESCO are giving something back to the local community and also giving something back to customers. These attributions can bring about consumers' positive perceptions of the store's intentionality for consumers interest and the broad social issues. Stores' intentionality can enhance consumers' trust towards stores.

It is widely recognised that loyalty can only be earned (Reichheld and Teal, 1996). From participants' experiences in the research, we can suggest that participants can develop trust for stores. Indeed, intentionality of stores is the key for the development of consumers' trust. In addition, consumers' positive/negative perceptions of stores' intentionality (in general) can generate positive/negative perceptions of various marketing strategies (such as RM tactics: club cards and some reward schemes). Indeed, the research has revealed that if consumers are sceptical of stores intentions in respect of their services and other marketing activities (primarily related to mix variables), consumers will generalise these as a sign of lack good intentions. This generalisation of stores intentions will have spill-over effect on consumers' perceptions of stores' other conducts and strategies. In addition, consumers' perception of the stores' lack of good intentions can generate distrust. Thus, consumers' interpretations of various stores strategies can be very negative. For example, Barbara is sceptical of Sainsbury's intentions for customers (such as raising the height of shelves and moving things around). She does not trust the Sainsbury's store. She thinks that Sainsbury's is not honest about the 'country of origin' of the meat. She does not trust their claims:

> *I know Sainsbury's say they do but I am a bit dubious about some of the supermarkets because it is the European legislation if meat is packed in this country, they can say that it is British even if it comes from abroad. I think they should say where it comes from.*

Her low trust in Sainsbury's also reinforces her perceptions of Sainsbury's intentionality in terms of caring about consumers. Indeed, when she talked about her perceptions of their RM tactics,

> *Sainsbury's when I got these nectar cards and I had to fill out the form with my birthday on. Every year they send me a voucher for me to get something for my*

birthday. However, it does not make me think I want to shop there all the time. ... I don't think they are making any effort. They are just using it as a tool you know to draw you in. I mean, what they are doing, they are playing the system.

Barbara's perception of RM tactics in Sainsbury's can reflect her distrust for big stores. Indeed, we can suggest that Barbara is sceptical of the motivations underlying Sainsbury's relationship marketing strategies. However, she has positive experiences when she shops in Booths in respect of their services and products. She trusts Booths for their good intentions for caring customers and local farmers:

I go around and I buy things and I look for what they have marked down. I go to Booths. I will pay a premium to buy Bowland milk because I know it is from this area.

In addition, her trust in Booths has been enhanced by her value congruence with Booths. Moreover, trust/distrust is the key factor to affect her cognition, affect and behaviour towards stores.

In marketing, value incongruence between customers and retailers has been explored (O'Malley and Prethero, 2004). It has been suggested that value incongruence can result in consumers' low trust and a high scepticism for retailers. In addition, low trust can lead to negative perceptions of retailers' RM strategies and tactics. Moreover, value incongruence and low trust has been the dominant theme in studies (e.g., O'Malley and Prethero, 2004).

However, in the current research, it has been revealed that participants can develop trust in stores. In addition, consumers' trust can further generate positive interpretations of retailers' intentions of RM strategies. Therefore, it can be suggested that we don't have to be too pessimistic about the possibility of earning consumers' trust. However, what we have to stress here is that 'intentionality' is the fundamental element for the development of trust. The analysis has revealed that retailers' Mix management (especially services) in store can determine consumers' perception of retailers' intentions for consumers. In addition, consumers' perceptions of retailers' intentions derived from their shopping experiences in respect of services, products and personnel (mix management) have 'spill-over' effect. Indeed, as discussed before, participants always evaluate stores' activities and their motivations based on their perceptions of retailers' intentions.

In addition, another aspect of intentionality is related to 'universal values'. Participants' perceptions of the intentions of retailers' activities or programmes (which aim to express their moral and ethical stances and universal values) can also affect their perception of retailers' intentionality. Participants can increase their trust towards stores if the stores intentionally engage in some actions, which convey 'universal values'. This is another aspect of intentionality. Intentionality can reflect store' sense of 'honesty' and 'responsibility'. It can be manifested through their engagement in some broader social issues. Indeed, researches have suggested that stores' Corporate Social Responsibility programmes can enhance consumers' loyalty towards stores and brands. Value congruence can increase consumers' trust and commitment to stores. Another reason is that stores' Corporate Social Responsibility programmes can demonstrate the company concerns about broader issues and their concerns can reflect their honesty and responsibility. Then consumers can infer from these cues in terms of stores' intentionality and these inferences of stores' positive intentionality can spill over stores' other programmes and activities. Intentionality can enhance consumers' perceptions of stores' predictability and dependability. We can suggest that these factors can function together to enhance consumer's trust towards companies.

Chapter Summary:

This chapter has illustrated two case studies. From the exploration of two participants' experiences in depth, we can suggest the associations between consumers' value congruence and store relationship (commitment) mediated by other aspects of relationship (such as attraction, interdependence, intimacy and trust). The development of trust between consumers and stores is further explored and described as the extension of Chapter 10. How consumers' trust towards stores can affect customers' perceptions of RM strategies has also been described.

CHAPTER 13

CONCLUSIONS

The thesis is organised and structured in such a way that the main conclusions are presented, discussed, interpreted and analysed in the body of the text in individual chapters and sections. Indeed, this chapter aims to merely provide a summative view of the whole research. However, this does not reduce the importance of the reflections at the final stage in terms of the research findings and the whole research process. Indeed, these considerations can demonstrate the researcher's recognition in respect of the importance of reflexivity in interpretive research. In addition, these reflections also reflect the researcher's effort of implementing the reflexivity principle throughout the research. Thus, this chapter will focus on the following areas: research findings; contributions of the study; limitations of the research; future research and evaluative assessment of the research.

13.1 Research Findings

As a result of the research, a conceptual framework of consumer/store relationships has been developed. The limitation of this type of approach has been discussed in Section 8.3. However, it has been suggested that this conceptual framework can provide a device to integrate theories with the research findings. As such, it has proved to be successful. Indeed, we can suggest that the conceptual framework developed in the research can make a significant contribution to the development of a consumer/store relationship theory. The model provides an understanding of consumers' lived experiences in terms of their interactions, interdependences and bonds with their stores. The full details of the model have been presented in Figure 13.1.

The research findings can be summarised from the following five aspects. Firstly, the research has identified ten consumers' shopping motivations and subsequently investigated store meanings from consumers' 'lived' shopping and consumption experiences. The research has revealed that consumers generally have various types of shopping motivations. These motivations include functional, hedonic, symbolic and expressive. The research findings have shown that consumers can derive functional, experiential and symbolic/expressive meanings from interactions with stores and products. These values/meanings are the key factors affecting the establishment and development of consumer/store relationships. In addition, due to the structural and contextual features of interactions between consumers and stores, values and meanings in store contexts have their unique features. Indeed, the research has revealed the complexity of consumer/store interactions and values/meanings generated in these interactions.

Secondly, the research has revealed that meanings of shopping and consumption can also be affected by social-cultural factors and various external constraints. For example, shopping motivations are associated with values, which are prevailing at the social cultural level. In addition, these socio-cultural frameworks of shopping and consumption can be manifested at individual level in mundane shopping and consumption activities. Indeed, there are two main themes that have emerged in terms of participants' shopping and consumption activities. One theme has confirmed the shared belief that grocery shopping can be regarded as a life role tasks and also gendered activities for women. In addition, certain shared dispositions of the role do exist and have been internalized /socialized by women.

Another theme is that the 'subjective turn' as a cultural phenomenon has exerted great influence on the values and meanings associated with shopping and consumption. Indeed, these two cultural level perceptions of shopping and consumption have created various kinds of ambivalence for the UK working women when they conduct their grocery shopping activities. For example, the research has shown that women have to face the dilemmas (1) between their life role tasks and their desire to pursue some enjoyment (2) between their life roles and the construction of their self and self-concept in the shopping and consumption activities.

Moreover, the analysis has revealed that authenticity issues people have to face in the modern era also generate ambivalence between various aspects of consumers' self concept such as: inner self, private self and presenting/public self; personal self and collective self (multiple social identities) and relational selves. The research has shown that participants make effort to reconcile these dilemmas and ambivalence by shopping in different stores and purchasing different products for consumption occasions. In addition, the ambivalence in respect of authenticity issues (compounded with self-related motivations) can affect participants' approach and avoidance behaviour towards stores and subsequently, the nature of consumer/store relationships.

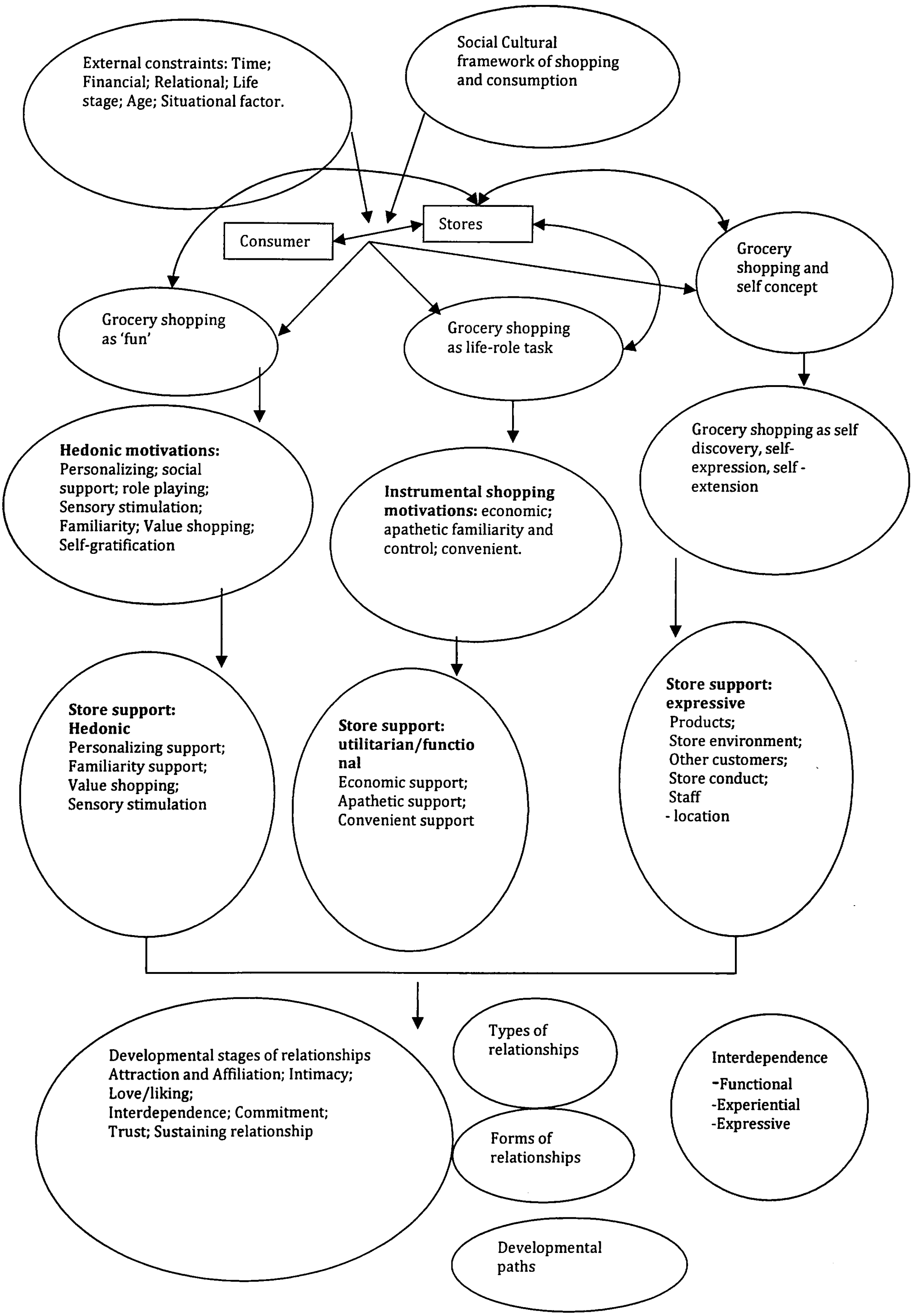


Figure 13.1: A Conceptual Framework for Consumer/Store Relationships

Thirdly, the research has revealed that consumers have to reconcile their life role tasks, self and identities and also their desire for pleasure seeking from mundane activities and their shopping and consumption experiences. Indeed, the research has also revealed that consumers have a set of stores to choose from for their grocery shopping tasks. I termed this set of stores as 'store constellations'. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 11, the set of stores can provide various supports such as functional (life-role tasks), hedonic and symbolic/expressive. The set of stores function as a system and consumers manipulate these resources and values/meanings associated with these stores. In this process, consumers can strive to fulfil and reconcile various kinds of needs and motivations under various external constraints.

Fourthly, the research findings have confirmed the validity of the existence and the plausibility of investigating consumer/store relationships at consumers' lived experience level. The research has revealed that consumer/store relationships can be described as 'meaning-based' relationships. Indeed, consumers develop various types of relationships with stores in which they conduct their shopping. In addition, nature of the relationships depends on meanings and support that consumers can derive from their interactions with stores. Indeed, meanings and support from stores can determine the level and type of interdependence, types of and forms of consumer/store relationships. The research has suggested the possibility to conceptualize various types of connections and bonds between consumers and their stores. In addition, we have demonstrated that forms of human relationships can be used as metaphors to describe consumer/store bonds. This research has identified three types of interdependences, three types of relationships and different forms of relationships (see Chapter 9). In addition, the analysis has revealed that consumer/store relationships are not static but a dynamics and developmental process. By analyzing snapshots of different consumers' different stages relationships with stores, the researcher has documented the features of relationship qualities for various developmental stages of consumer/store relationships.

Fifthly, the research findings suggest that the existence of relationships between consumers and their stores can have implications for the plausibility of relationship thoughts/principles in store contexts. The research has revealed that consumer/store relationships are meaning or value based. In addition, the research has suggested that values can be generated in consumer and store interaction process. Values that consumers derived from stores are generated through their interactions with various attributes in stores. These interactions can be physical, social and interpersonal. Indeed, these values are the key for the generation and development of consumer/store relationships.

As discussed in Chapter 10, the development of various qualities of relationships (such as the attraction, the intimacy, the commitment and trust) depends on various impersonal and interpersonal factors in the store. Indeed, these store attributes are the focus of mix management. This indicates that the importance of mix management cannot be diminished in respect of consumer/store relationship development. Creating and enhancing values for consumers are what mix management strives to achieve. Indeed, the research has revealed that these values can be the foundation for the existence and development of consumer/store relationships. In addition to emphasising the essential role of mix variables in the establishment and development of relationships between consumers and their stores, we also stress the importance of stores relational efforts on the development of more intimate relationships with consumers.

As discussed in Chapter 10, at the developing and maintaining stages of consumer/store relationships, relational efforts (such as the staff service and the Club cards) can play important roles. Therefore, it can be suggested that relational efforts are important in the development and maintenance stage of consumer/store relationships. Thus, we can suggest that mix management and relationship management can be complementary. In fact the complementary nature between mix and relationship management has been revealed from consumers' perspective. Indeed, mix variables and relationship efforts can play important roles at different developmental stages of consumer/store relationships.

13.2 Contributions of the Research

The contributions of the study can be summarised as follows. Firstly, in terms of meanings of shopping and consumption, the research has extended the extant literature by explicitly emphasising the expressive values of shopping and consumption. The research findings suggest that the cultural phenomena – a 'subjective turn' - can be manifested at individual level in consumers' mundane activities. In addition, we have to acknowledge that modern consumers are not self-indulgent pleasure-seekers, utility-maximizers or even symbol manipulators. Indeed, consumers can express their values and discover their self even in grocery shopping. In addition, these experiences can give consumers a sense of self fulfilment and authenticity. Moreover, through what to buy and where to buy, consumers can communicate their shared values and beliefs with other customers and the stores. Indeed, this can reflect what has been described in Chapter 3 as the 'brand community' and reflect consumers' 'identification with companies'.

Secondly, the research has contributed to the store loyalty research. The research has developed a conceptual model of consumer/store relationships. Indeed, consumer/store relationships are meaning-based. Thus, in addition to cognitive attitudes towards stores, affective and emotive aspects of consumers' store experiences can provide more insights into consumers' store patronage behaviour. In addition to the exclusive and highly committed relationships, consumers can develop various meaningful relationships with stores. Thus, this research has applied the anthropological-relationship approach to explore consumer store behaviour. Indeed, the research findings can extend current consumer store loyalty literature by emphasising the diversity and dynamics of consumer/store relationships.

Thirdly, the research contributes to relationship theory development in consumer markets, specifically in store contexts. By applying interdependence-oriented relationship theories and the symbolic interactionist approach to investigating consumer/store relationships, the study has developed a model for consumer/store relationships. The research has explored the nature (interactions, interdependences and affective bonds), types and forms of relationships. The research has also investigated relationship dimensions/features at various developmental stages of consumer/store relationships. The research findings have revealed the importance to acknowledge the diversities and dynamics of consumer/store relationships. In terms of theoretical framework, this research has shown that in addition to social exchange theories, we suggest that symbolic interactionist approach can be another important perspective for the understanding of commercial relationships in mass consumer markets.

Fourthly, the research also contributes to the debate in respect of the applicability of relationship principles and relationship marketing in store contexts. The research has confirmed the validity of investigating and understanding consumer/store relationships at consumers' lived experience level. In addition, the research has shown that consumer/store relationships exist between consumers and their stores. In addition, we suggest that the generation of consumer/store bonds/relationships depends on values/meanings of stores for consumers lived store/shopping and consumption experiences. Moreover, these values can be generated by both mix variables and relationship management strategies and efforts. Thus, it can be suggested that (1) relationship principles are applicable in store contexts and (2) RM strategies can be valid and effective for the development of consumer/store relationships. Indeed the effectiveness of RM strategies has to match the nature and features of consumer/store relationships.

Fifthly, in terms of the theoretical foundations of relationship marketing, the research revealed that strategic level definitions (value creation and relationship generation at the company level) can be applied to commercial relationships in store contexts. Indeed, values and meanings are the key factors for the establishment and development of consumer/store relationships. In addition, the research has explored how these values can be generated. Indeed, marketing mix variables have proved to be the main sources for generation of values and meanings for consumers in store contexts. The research has also shown that meanings derived from mix variables are the foundation for establishment and development of consumer/store relationships. The research has also showed that for consumers who have developed certain types of relationships or at certain stages of the relationship development (such as developing and maintaining stages, as discussed in Chapter 10), relationship efforts from retailers can enhance consumer/store relationships with respect to intimacy, trust and commitment. Therefore, it can be suggested that mix management and relationship management are crucial for the development of different types of consumer store relationships and relationships at different developmental stages.

Sixthly, in terms of the paradigm shift debate, the research has confirmed the existence of consumer/store relationships and revealed the nature, forms and the types of relationships between consumers and their stores. It also revealed how these relationships can be initiated, developed and maintained. It can be suggested that the paradigm shift notion here is more concerned about the change of perceptions of the nature of commercial exchanges. In this sense, the paradigm shift notion can be beneficial because it can open a new perspective and new discourse for marketing in consumer markets. However, in practice, it does not mean that using technology (such as direct marketing), is the only way to implement the relationship marketing principles. RM should be posited at the strategic level and it should be regarded as a value-generation process.

13.3 Future Research

By conducting research, interpreting the results, reflecting on the research findings and research process, the researcher has identified various areas for future research. These can be classified into two categories: (1) extensions of this work and (2) future research directions.

13.3.1 Extension of the Research

It can be suggested that the current research can be further extended in the following directions. Firstly, due to the time limits of the PhD project, this research has explored consumer/store relationships as 'snapshots'. The research has focused on nature, forms and types of consumer/store relationships. In addition, by exploring consumer/store relationships at different stages, the research has also described the features of consumer/store relationship qualities at different developmental stages. Therefore, by taking a longitudinal approach, the next stage of the research can aim to explore the dynamics and development of consumer/store relationships. In addition to in-depth interviews, other forms of data and data collection can be used (such as the participant's diary).

Secondly, this research has developed one conceptual model for consumer/store relationships. The focus is on consumer/store relationships. However, the research has not focused on what effects other factors (such as individual personal traits (e.g., attachment style) can exert on the nature and the development of consumer/store relationships. Therefore, the aim of the next stage of the study can be to further explore how personal traits can affect various aspects of consumer/store relationships.

Thirdly, the research has explored various dimensions of consumer/store relationships such as 'interdependence', 'affective bond', the types and forms of relationships, and the features of relationship quality at different stages of relationships. However, how to measure the quality of consumer/store relationships is still an issue. This issue will be tackled in future research. The extension of the study is to develop a scale for the measurement of consumer/store relationship quality.

Fourthly, trust has emerged as a construct, which can affect the establishment and development of beneficial relationships, which can determine the success of company's relationship efforts and other marketing strategies. The research has identified various factors affecting consumers' trust (such as value congruence- in particular the 'universal value' congruence). The research has also revealed that consumers' perception of stores' intentions and consumers' emotions can affect their trust in the store. Thus, the research can be extended to explore (1) the diversity and dynamics of trust; (2) investigate how individual personality can affect the development of trust in commercial contexts and (3) explore the effect of 'cognition' and 'emotion' on consumers' trust in stores.

Fifthly, the research findings can become the starting point for the quantitative stage of study. Firstly, the research has developed a conceptual framework for consumer/store relationships, i.e., 'motivation-meanings-relationships'. At the next stage, it is possible to examine the validity and reliability of this model by using quantitative methods. Secondly, in Chapter 14, value congruence-commitment model has been developed. Indeed, this model can be further examined by using more quantitative–oriented methods (Structural Equation Modelling). Thirdly, in Chapter 11, we have identified the following associations. We have explored the relationships between: (1) store meaning ambivalence-approach-avoidance behaviour and types of relationships; (2) self-congruity and store relationships; (3) self-construal and store relationships. In the next stage of the research, we can further examine these relationships. The premise of quantitatively examining these models is a kind of triangulation for the interpretive research. Thus, they can be regarded as the extension of this interpretive research.

Sixthly, at the socio-cultural level, there are differences between men and women in terms of their perceptions of shopping and consumption. The meanings and values derived from consumer/store interactions are different between men and women. As discussed in Chapter 6, there are gender differences in terms of nature and development of relationships when the female is involved in the relationship. The research has focused on female consumers. Indeed, the rationale for the sample decision has been clearly illustrated and justified. It can be suggested that male consumers and the comparison between female and male consumers can provide interesting insights into consumer/store relationships. Thus, it can be suggested that this study can be extended to choose male participants or to do a comparative study between male and female in respect of consumer/store relationships.

13.3.2 Future Research Directions

Several issues have been highlighted and developed in the thesis, which can form the basis for future research. Firstly, in Chapter 4, we have explicitly extended the extant literature on the values and meanings of shopping and consumption by emphasising the humanistic approach to shopping and consumption. This approach has emphasised expressive values of shopping and consumption. As discussed in Chapter 4, the 'subjective turn' is a cultural phenomenon in the West. The 'turn to the self' can be regarded as the social/cultural background for consumers' shopping and consumption activities. The significance of expressive meanings and the significance of shopping and consumption as a trajectory for consumers' self discovery and self fulfilment should not be trivialised. Indeed, the research has demonstrated that shopping and consumption can be a means for participants to achieve self discovery and self fulfilment. Dimensions of inner self (such as relational self, humanitarian self and eco-self) have been manifested through consumers' shopping and consumption experiences. It can be argued that the meanings of shopping and consumption can be revisited. In addition, the future study area will be to further develop the theory of shopping in consumer research context. Indeed, at the time that the researcher wrote up the thesis, some researchers have started to explore this subject. For example, Professor Pauline Maclaran presented her research 'new age religion and consumption of cosmic self' in Lancaster Management School seminar.

Secondly, in social psychology, theorists have developed social relationship models. For example, Fiske (1991, 1992) has proposed the 'relational models' theory. This theory has proposed four basic relational structures: *'communal sharing; equality matching; authority ranking and marketing pricing'*. It has been suggested that these social relationship structures can guide individuals' social actions, making sense of other people's behaviour, and evaluating others' social actions (Haslam, 1994, p.61). In addition, participants talked about their emotions (such as security, safety) and feelings (equality or inequality). In order to understand emotions and feelings involved in consumer/store relationships, we suggest that it is necessary to take into account the basic social relational structures which can become the sources of social actions and guidance for the evaluation of others actions. Therefore, we suggest that this will be the direction of for future research.

Thirdly, there are differences between UK and China culturally, economically and socially. In addition, in social psychology, the differences in terms of self, self-concept between the East (for example China) and the West (for example UK) has been emphasised. In particular, it can be suggested that meanings and values derived from consumer/store interactions can be different for consumers in China and in UK. Moreover, cultural differences in terms of social relationships also exist. Therefore, the future area of study will be to conduct the comparative study between China and UK with regard to: (1) meanings and values of shopping and consumption and (2) consumer/store relationships.

Fourthly, Fiske (1991) has emphasised the cultural and societal differences in terms of dominance of basic social relationship models. Therefore, it can be suggested that there are differences in terms of the main social relationship framework between China and UK. Therefore, another area of research will be to carry out a comparative study between China and UK in terms of the: (1) social relationship models and (2) the difference in terms of consumer/store relationships, which are caused by the differences of the main basic social relational structures.

Fifthly, we have suggested that the current research can be further extended to explore the diversity and dynamics of trust in commercial context. Indeed, at the cultural level, it has been suggested that there are differences in terms of trust level and the nature of trust between the East (in particular China) and the West. The further research directions can be extended to do a comparative study of trust between China and UK in commercial contexts.

13.4 The Research

The aims of the study, as described in Chapter 1, were:

- To explore the diversity and dynamics of relationship phenomena in terms of the nature of the relationship.
- To develop a model of consumer store relationships (p. 2).

In addition to these primary objectives, the researcher has encountered further challenges in the research process, which have been reported and recorded.

Firstly, as described in Chapter 7, the researcher has recognised that 'reflexivity' and 'openness' can be one way to make qualitative/interpretive research more convincing. Indeed, the researcher has encountered challenges in the whole research process. These challenges have ranged from the way of conducting interviews, dealing with the researcher-researched relationships, to carrying out the interpretation of the data and considering the representation issues in the writing up stage. Indeed, these issues have been critically explored. In this process, the research methodology has evolved and the understanding of the research phenomenon has been enhanced. These have been reported explicitly in Chapters 7 and 8.

Secondly, the researcher has experienced intellectual development by critically inquiring into the literature with regard to the research question and research methodology. Indeed, the research methodology has evolved from positivism to constructive-interpretive-feminist approach. In addition, the researcher has personally also developed her notion of the ways of how interpretive research can be better conducted. For example, the researcher regard that research is a process in which the researcher and participants work together to generate the knowledge. The researcher personally engaged in the subject (both in the interview and data analysis process). Indeed, in order to understand consumers' lived experiences of shopping and consumption, the researcher has reflexively conducted the research to explore these experiences experientially, in the social and cultural context and at individual level. Therefore, the research has emphasised the interplay and interactions of between individual and social structure; the subjectivity and intersubjectivity when we explore the meanings, which consumers can derive from their shopping and consumption experiences.

13.5 Limitations of the Research

The researcher has been aware of the limitations of the research. Firstly, due to limited resource and time, the research only explored female consumers' shopping and consumption experiences. The rationale for the sampling decision has been justified. Female consumers can be a valuable category to be explored. However, if the researcher can compare gender differences, a more holistic view of consumers' shopping and consumption experiences and a more holistic understanding of consumer/store relationship phenomenon can possibly be gained. This will be achieved in the future research.

Secondly, the research has used a small sample size (10 participants) and relatively homogenous/purpose sample (age, income level and family structure). The decision for the purposive sampling has been discussed. Indeed, every participant's interview transcript has been treated as a case study and been given in-depth analysis. Through in-depth analysis, the researcher has given thick description of consumers' shopping and experiences and their relationships with stores. However, if the researcher can broaden the recruitment of participants from wider walks of life (age, income and family structures), more external factors and different perceptions of grocery shopping might be identified.

Thirdly, due to the nature of the PhD research, the researcher has relied on her interpretation and analysis of the data. Therefore it has been pointed out that the interpretation is ONE interpretation conducted by the PhD researcher. Indeed, the researcher has been aware of the hermeneutic nature of interpretations and understanding. Therefore, the researcher has tried to equip herself with comprehensive knowledge from various research streams. The researcher has attempted to be theoretically sensitive but also immersed in the data. Therefore, the researcher has been very conscientious when she conducted the data analysis. Indeed, the researcher spent two and half years analyzing the data. However, the researcher still has to acknowledge the ONE-PERSON interpretations as a limitation of the research.

13.6 Assessment of the Research

In consumer research literature, some researchers have explicitly illustrated the criteria with regard to the evaluation of interpretive consumer research. For example, Spiggle (1994) has described how an interpretive research can be assessed:

- 'Usefulness. Does the work aid in furthering inquiry? Do investigators make connections between their representations and the central issues, problems, and debates in the field? Are the constructs, ideas and framework applicable, transferable, to other research settings, contexts and domains? Do the inferences and descriptions of their generation provide a way of looking at phenomena that extend beyond the specific domain studied?

- Innovation. Do the constructs, ideas and framework provide new and creative ways of looking at experience and behaviour? Do they transform our conceptualisations? Is the representation new?
- Integration. Does the representation achieve a synthesis, an emergent integration, a holistic framework that goes beyond the identification of common themes in the data? Is the representation more than an assemblage of inferences or reporting of regularities in emic perspectives? Is there a unifying idea, concept, or framework that unites the observations and inferences?
- Resonance. Is the work enlightening, resonating, evocative and sensitising to us? Does the representation enrich our understanding about identical, similar and even dissimilar phenomena?
- Adequacy. Is there a sufficient basis presented for assessing how grounded in the data that the representation is?' (Taken from Spiggle, 1994, p.500-501).

Arnold and Fischer (1994) have also provided the criteria for assessing hermeneutic interpretation:

- 'The interpretation must be coherent and free of contradiction. Themes must be documented. Observations should be supported with relevant examples.
- A command of the relevant literature will be evident. Tradition must be acknowledged.

- The interpretation should be comprehensible to the reading audience, given their [pre-]-understanding.
- The interpretation should 'enlighten'. It is "fruitful" in revealing new dimensions of the problem at hand... It yields insights that lead to revision of [pre]-understanding. This revision should be made quite explicit.
- The prose should be pervasive, engaging, interesting, and stimulating, and appealing' (taken from Arnold and Fischer, 1994, p. 64).

Indeed, these criteria are drawn from the consumer research literature. Therefore, it can be suggested that these criteria are more specifically valid to apply to interpretive consumer research, which is the case of this PhD research. Indeed, these criteria have addressed the elements for a 'good' interpretive/hermeneutic research. The researcher has been considering these various elements at different stages of the research from research design (research question and research methodology) to field work (conducting interviews and data analysis) to the writing up (structuring, organising the model and the thesis). Indeed, reflexivity has been emphasised throughout the research process.

At the end of the thesis, the researcher suggests that this research has achieved the research objectives and met the challenges. Firstly, an in-depth study of consumer/store relationships has been undertaken in the context of UK working-women. Indeed, this is the first in-depth study of the phenomenon. A conceptual model for consumer/store relationships has been developed. Secondly, 'reflexivity' has been the driving principle, which has guided the whole research process. The issues and questions of research methodology and research design have been addressed explicitly. The research challenges have been explored and recognised explicitly within the thesis. Especially the existential phenomenological methodology developed by Thompson et al (1989, 1990) has been critically elaborated from philosophical and methodological perspectives. The challenges and the subsequent reflexivity have contributed to (1) development of the research in respect to research question and research methodology; (2) presentation, interpretation and analysis of the research findings in the form of this thesis. However, we have to admit that if the research has met the specific evaluation criteria described above, it needs to be left for others to judge.

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