AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Jennifer D. Weiss for the degree of Master of Science in Design and Human Environment presented on May 22, 2008.


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The US bridal industry has grown over the last 80 years to become a multi-billion dollar industry. Surprisingly, little research has been conducted concerning the consumer behavior of brides. The bride is in a situation where purchase decisions need to be made. She has many things she will purchase over the course of the engagement. But the shopping situation is unique in regards to the budget, if there is one, as well as the fantasy involved in the purchase of a wedding gown. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the consumer behavior of brides who were shopping for their wedding gowns. This study used Fishbein’s Theory of Reasoned Action as a theoretical framework to study how attitude, subjective norm and perceived playfulness affected the behavioral results, store satisfaction and purchase intention. Consumer involvement and consumer shopping motivations were examined as moderating variables in the relationships between attitude and store satisfaction and perceived playfulness and store satisfaction.
Based on previous literature, hypotheses were developed concerning the relationships among these variables. It was hypothesized that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived playfulness would all be positively related to store satisfaction. It was also hypothesized that store satisfaction would be positively related to purchase intention. Consumer involvement was hypothesized to be a moderating variable for both the attitude to store satisfaction relationship as well as the perceived playfulness relationship. Likewise, consumer shopping motivations (utilitarian vs. hedonic) were hypothesized to be a moderating variable for both the attitude to store satisfaction relationship as well as the perceived playfulness relationship.

This study utilized survey methods to assess the shopping behavior of brides shopping for their wedding gown. All scales were adopted from existing literature and reliabilities of scales were established. Surveys were conducted in a store-intercept format at three different area bridal retailers over a 12 week period of time. A total of 72 brides participated in the survey.

Regression statistics were used to analyze the data. To look at the relationships between attitude, subjective norm, and perceived playfulness and store satisfaction a stepwise multiple regression was conducted. Attitude was found to be a significant, positive predictor of store satisfaction. The results from a simple regression show that the relationship between store satisfaction and purchase intention was significant and positive. Finally, a nested regression was used to analyze the moderating relationships of consumer involvement and consumer
shopping motivations. Consumer involvement was found to be a significant moderator of the attitude – store satisfaction relationship. All other hypothesized relationships were not found to be significant.

The results of this study show that bridal store managers need to be concerned with how their customers perceive their store, as store satisfaction is a significant predictor of purchase intention. In order for the store to maintain or increase sales, bridal customers need to be happy with the store they are shopping at. The results also show that brides differ on how involved they feel in the bridal gown shopping process. This in turn affected their attitude toward shopping and their store satisfaction. Managers need to make sure they are helping to encourage realistic expectations on the part of the bride, in order to keep the level of satisfaction with their store high. The findings from this study that can be directly applied in a managerial sense are limited. Future research is needed to discover exactly what aspects are important to brides as they shop in order to be more helpful to store owners and managers.
In Search of the Dress:
An Analysis of the Consumer Decision Making Process of Brides

by
Jennifer D. Weiss

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Jennifer D. Weiss, Author
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In Search of the Dress: An Analysis of the Consumer Decision Making Process of Brides

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The day many little girls dream of has finally arrived. She is engaged. And now begins the process of planning every tiny detail which will go into what is supposed to be the best day of her life. A very important, not so small detail is the wedding gown. The gown she will wear is something many girls have dreamed of for years, ever since Barbie got engaged to Ken. “The gown” has been widely played up by modern media, from movies, to magazines, to 5000 square foot retail spaces dedicated solely to helping the bride-to-be find her perfect gown. An entire multi-billion dollar industry has sprung up around this day, just since the 1930s (Wallace, 2004). The ideal wedding has gone from the casual backyard get-together of the 1920’s to a full-on production of immense proportions. It was estimated that the average cost of a wedding in 2006 was $26,400 (Wedding Industry Statistics, 2007). This is shocking considering the median household income for 2006 was just $43,200 (Kirchhoff, 2006). This shows that typical American couples are willing to spend a good portion of their annual income on a one-day event. The bridal industry has not come away from this surge in consumer interest without profit. The value of industry directly related to weddings is estimated at $58.5 billion, while the industry both directly and indirectly related to weddings is valued at upwards of $139.8 billion
(Wedding Industry Statistics, 2007). These statistics may even be underrepresented, considering the number of privately held companies within the bridal industry.

1.2 Problem Statement

Considering the size and profitability of this industry, it is somewhat surprising to see how little academic research has been conducted regarding this consumption situation. One researcher, Cele Otnes, and her research partners have published several articles studying the bridal industry from the perspective of ritual consumption (Otnes & Scott, 1996; Nelson & Otnes, 2005; Otnes & Lowrey, 1993). Much of this research surrounds the concept of gift giving within a wedding scenario. Little to no research has been conducted regarding consumer behavior within the wedding shopping extravaganza. This study will begin to fill in some of the holes in this area of consumer research, by evaluating what elements of the decision making process are more important.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The lack of research in this area seems puzzling due to the unique nature of the bridal shopping situation. The bride is in a situation where purchase decisions need to be made. She has many things she will purchase over the course of the engagement. But the situation is unique in regards to the budget; this may be the
one time in a woman’s life where she may have no budget, or at least little regard for one. For her wedding day, most women will spare no expense in order to have the wedding of their dreams. According to Mara and Ronnie Rothstein, principal owners of Kleinfeld’s bridal boutique, one of the largest boutiques in the nation, a bride is more likely to spend an exorbitant amount of money to create the perfect wedding than she is to spend the same amount on her first child (About us, 2007). And the gown is no exception. According to the Weddingchannel.com, one of the first sources of information a bride will turn to for wedding planning advice, the gown should cost approximately 10% of entire wedding budget. Based on the average cost figure from above, this would be about $2700.

Research focused on the consumer behavior of a bride is greatly needed. By understanding how a bride shops, what is important to her, and how to make what is most important more readily available, retailers will be able to better satisfy their customers and, in turn, increase their profitability.

This study is designed to take a first look into the minds of brides shopping for their wedding gown. Shopping for a wedding gown is a much different situation than going to the grocery store, or even buying everyday apparel products. In this situation, there is likely fantasy involved. A bride may have been dreaming about the gown she would like to have for most of her childhood and adult life. There is also the consideration of others’ opinions. A bride most likely will not be shopping alone. Generally, her mother, grandmother, friends, sisters, and even mother-in-law are
present for all the shopping trips. Their opinion is important to her. But even more so, if her mother is paying for the gown, her opinion is essential. Finally, the wedding gown shopping experience is different from most other shopping situations because of the deadline. Most brides know the date of their wedding before they begin shopping. This provides real motivation to get this purchase done with. A bride has to consider not only the date of her wedding, but the months worth of fittings necessary, plus the average six month lead time to order a gown. This leaves most brides with very little time to find “the gown.”

The purpose of this research is to investigate the consumer behavior of brides while they are shopping for their wedding gown. Specifically, this study aims to examine (1) how attitude toward shopping for a wedding gown, subjective norm, and perceived playfulness of shopping for a wedding gown influence brides’ level of store satisfaction, (2) how store satisfaction is related to purchase intention, and (3) how consumer involvement and consumer shopping orientation moderate the relationship between attitude toward shopping for a gown and store satisfaction and between perceived playfulness of shopping for a wedding gown and the level of store satisfaction.

The approach taken in this research is similar to that of other consumer behavior situations. The Theory of Reasoned Action provides a useful theoretical framework for this study. This theory, initially developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) provides an explanation for what influences behaviors or volition, or
behaviors performed by choice. According to this theory, a person’s intention to
perform a certain behavior is the best indicator as to whether or not they will. The
three components of the theory are attitude, subjective norm, and perceived
playfulness.

Also considered will be consumer involvement (Richins, Bloch & McQuarrie,
1992) and consumer shopping motivations (Babin, Darden & Griffin, 1994), both of
which are common to consumer behavior research. For this study, these variables
will be looked at for their moderating properties. The outcomes studied in this
research are two fold. The first outcome is store satisfaction. Store satisfaction is
concerned with consumers’ level of satisfaction with the store where they either
made their purchase or conducted their shopping trip (Miller, 1976). Purchase
intention is also being considered as an outcome, in order to see whether these
other variables are indeed making a difference which will be seen by the retailer.

1.4 Hypotheses

Based on a review of the previous literature surrounding these areas of interest, the
following hypotheses have been developed, as discussed above:

H1-3: Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Playfulness and Store Satisfaction

H1: Attitude will be positively related to store satisfaction.
H2: Subjective norm will be positively related to store satisfaction.

H3: Perceived playfulness will be positively related to store satisfaction.

**H4: Store Satisfaction and Purchase Intention**

H4: Store satisfaction will be positively related to purchase intention.

**H5 & 7: Moderating Relationship of Involvement**

H5: Consumer involvement will moderate the relationship between attitude and store satisfaction.

H7: Consumer involvement will moderate the relationship between perceived playfulness and store satisfaction.

**H6 & 8: Moderating Relationship of Consumer Shopping Motivations**

H6: Consumer shopping motivation will moderate the relationship between attitude and store satisfaction.

H8: Consumer shopping motivation will moderate the relationship between perceived playfulness and store satisfaction.
1.5 Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout the study:

**Involvement:** the extent to which consumers’ product knowledge is related to their self-knowledge about desirable values and needs (Knox, Walker & Marshall, 1994).

**Utilitarian Shopping Motivation:** the consumer has motivation to buy a product, pays attention to the alternatives available, seeks out and evaluates information about the product, makes a decision, then consumes the product (Bettman, 1979).

**Subjective Norm:** a person’s belief about whether significant others think that he or she should engage in the behavior in question (Weber et al., 2007).

**Hedonic Shopping Motivation:** the multi-sensory, fantasy and emotional aspects associated with a consumer’s experience with a product (Hirshman & Holbrook, 1982).

**Store Satisfaction:** the level of satisfaction with the store where the purchase was made, or the shopping was conducted (Bolton, 1998).

**Purchase Intention:** how likely a consumer feels they are to purchase the product if they were in a real life purchase scenario (Herzenstein, Posavac & Brakus, 2007).
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

The purpose of this study is to investigate the consumer behavior of brides’ who are shopping for their wedding gown. In order to provide adequate justification for the model and hypothesis development, a review of previous literature surrounding the subject areas was conducted. A synopsis of this review will be discussed in this chapter.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2 Fishbein’s Theory of Reasoned Action

The Theory of Reasoned Action was initially developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980; Fishbein, 1980). This theory originally was used to explain what Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) coined behaviors of volition. That is, behaviors which people perform because they choose to do so. This theory assumes that people indeed choose to perform behaviors. The second assumption of the theory is that humans reason about which decision is the better one to make, thus, reasoned action (Weber, Martin & Corrigan, 2007). According to this theory, a person’s intention to perform a certain behavior is the best predictor as to whether or not they will. An intention represents a person’s conscious decision to exert some effort to enact a given
behavior (Connor & Armitage, 1998). Intentions are believed to be strongly related
to an individual’s actual behavior, when measured at the same level of specificity
(Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). According to the original theory, two constructs combined
to form an individual’s intention; attitude and subjective norm.

Ajzen and Fishbein, felt that their model was sufficient in explaining human
decision making, and that more variables than these two were not necessary (Ajzen
& Fishbein, 1980). This idea has been widely criticized by many researchers. As a
result, many attempts to find additional variables have been made (Langdridge,
Sheeran & Connolly, 2007). These attempts have resulted in additional predictors
which can be divided into three categories: intention, attitude and subjective norm
(Conner & Armitage, 1998). Other researchers have also considered additional
variables outside the bounds of the original variables within the model. An example
of this is perceived playfulness (Davis, 1989). This third variable will be considered in
this paper. All three constructs will be discussed below. A model of the Theory of
Reasoned Action is provided (Figure 2.1).
2.2.1 Attitude

Attitude is the person’s overall evaluation of what it would be like to perform a behavior (Langdridge et al., 2007). An attitude is affective or valenced, that is, it can be either positive or negative, or even neutral (Hale, Householder & Greene, 2002). The attitude considered in the theory is the attitude toward the specific behavior, not the entire subject area in general. So for this paper, the attitude will be toward the bridal gown shopping experience, not to bridal gowns in general. The attitude is toward the experience, not the product or service (Hansen, Jensen & Solgaard, 2004). Some research using the Theory of Reasoned Action has found attitude to be the more important predictor of behavioral intention, and
subsequently, the actual behavior. These scenarios are generally more individualistic in nature, decisions that a consumer makes daily, sometimes without realizing the thought that goes into them (Hansen et al., 2004).

2.2.2 Subjective Norm

Subjective norm relates to a person’s belief about whether significant others think that he or she should engage in the behavior in question, resulting in feelings of congruence or dissonance with these people who are important to them (Weber et al., 2007). Significant others can be anyone whose opinion is important to and valued by the consumer who is being asked to act (Landridge et al., 2007). These opinions can also be seen as social pressures. That is, the opinion can be wanted or unwanted by the consumer in question. Situations where the subjective norm is going to affect behavior are typically going to be either very large decisions or situations where etiquette or the appropriateness of behavior will matter. Some research situations have found that subjective norms play a more important role than attitudes (Gastil, 2000). An example of one such situation could be a person’s desire to order a drink at dinner. They do not necessarily feel this is a bad decision, however because they are out to dinner with their boss, they may feel it is an inappropriate choice (Hansen et al., 2004).
2.2.3 Perceived Playfulness

Perceived playfulness is a newer variable in the Theory of Reasoned Action. Much of the research conducted has been in the area of technology acceptance. Perceived playfulness has been defined as a situation-specific individual characteristic that represents a type of intellectual or cognitive playfulness. It describes an individual’s tendency to interact spontaneously, inventively, and imaginatively with the product being considered (Fang, Chan, Brzezinski & Xu, 2005). Playfulness can be studied from two approaches. The first approach treats playfulness as a trait and therefore a motivational characteristic of individuals. In this way, playfulness is more lasting or enduring. The second approach views playfulness as a state or situational characteristic of the interaction between the individual and the situation. According to this approach, perceived playfulness is situation based and not necessarily a lasting characteristic of the consumer. The level of perceived playfulness can come and go as the consumer moves through different stages of the decision making process (Fang et al., 2005). Studies have shown that both types of perceived playfulness can act on a consumer (or adopter) simultaneously. These concepts are not mutually exclusive (Martocchio & Webster, 1992). The general findings show that when consumers (or adopters) perceive higher levels of playfulness either with the product or the process of purchasing (or adopting) the product, there is a higher level of behavioral intention (Moon & Kim, 2001).
For the purpose of this study, perceived playfulness will be defined as a situational characteristic, and thus can be measured based on characteristics of the process of bridal gown shopping. Perceived playfulness is defined as the degree to which a person believes that shopping for bridal gowns would make her (or him) joyful, or that it is enjoyable in its own right, apart from any outcomes of the experience (i.e. actual purchase of a gown).

2.3 Consumer Outcomes

2.3.1 Store Satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction is a common outcome variable in marketing and retailing research. In more recent research, distinctions have been made between the types of satisfaction a consumer may experience. What has traditionally been measured as satisfaction is the product-related judgment following a purchase or consumption experience (Yi, 1991). A more accurate term for this type of satisfaction is “consumption satisfaction” according to Fitzsimons, Greenleaf & Lehmann (1997). Beginning in the late 1970’s, researchers began to consider multiple aspects to consumer satisfaction (Czepiel & Rosenberg, 1977; Westbrook & Newman, 1978; Westbrook, Newman & Taylor, 1978). These researchers proposed that a consumer may experience satisfaction, as well as dissatisfaction, with the process of making the decision, as well as with the product itself. Satisfaction can
also go beyond simply the product or experience purchasing the product to satisfaction with the store where the product was purchased. In the same way a consumer can be satisfied with a product, they can be satisfied with their experience at the store (Grossman, 1999). A consumer’s satisfaction with a store can be based on many factors including the length of their relationship with the store (Bolton, 1998), whether their expectations for the store were met (Grossman, 1999), or even based upon liking for the store atmosphere or employees (Bolton, 1998). Store satisfaction is a tricky measure because a customer’s dissatisfaction with something outside the control of the store may be accidentally projected on the store. These extraneous dissatisfaction sources may be the product purchased, the service received from a specific employee, a previous experience with another store in the same chain, etc. (Miller, 1976). Store satisfaction may also be unique to customers; while one customer is highly satisfied with a store, another may be only be marginally satisfied or even dissatisfied. Each consumer needs to determine for themselves how they feel about the store in question (Morganosky, 1988).

2.3.2 Purchase Intentions

Purchase intention is a very common outcome variable in consumer behavior research. Purchase intention has been defined as the extent to which a consumer actually wants to purchase the product in question from a specified retailer (Chen & He, 2003). In most research situations, the participants do not have
the ability to actually purchase the product they are being asked about. In this way, actual behavior cannot be measured. But by measuring the participant’s intention to purchase, the researcher is getting a better picture of how the participant is feeling, and what they would be likely to do if they were in a real life purchase situation (Herzenstein, Posavac & Brakus, 2007). Applying this to the bridal gown industry, brides who experience higher levels of utilitarian motivations and decision satisfaction may have a stronger purchase intention.

2.4 Moderating Variables

2.4.1 Consumer Involvement

The concept of consumer involvement has received much attention in marketing literature for more than 30 years (Warrington & Shim, 2000). A true definition of consumer involvement cannot be given due to disagreements between researchers. However, the most agreed upon definition is that consumer involvement is “a person’s perceived relevance of an object based on inherent needs, values and interests” (Bauer, Sauer & Becker, 2006). When a consumer sees a product as being more important or relevant to them, they will be more involved in the decision to purchase the product (Richins, Bloch & McQuarrie, 1992). Some researchers have taken a less concrete view of involvement and regard it more as a function of perceived consequences resulting from the purchase decision (Peter &
Olson, 1987). Knox et al. (1994) took this viewpoint when they regarded involvement with a product as “the extent to which consumers’ product knowledge is related to their self-knowledge about desirable values and needs”. Other functional definitions include viewing involvement as an individual’s subjective sense of concern, care, importance, personal relevance, and significance attached to an attitude (Thomsen, Borgida & Lavine, 1995), a person’s motivational state of mind with regard to an object or activity (Mittal & Lee, 1989), or a mobilization of behavioral resources for the achievement of relevant goals (Poiesz & de Bont, 1995).

Consumer involvement has received widespread attention from researchers studying the consumers’ decision making process. Grand statements have been made about the importance of involvement. Laaksonen (1994) considers involvement as one of the central determinants of attitude formation and purchasing behavior. Consumer involvement has been useful in explaining consumers’ ultimate concern and interest in a product category, and it influences, among other things, information search, brand loyalty, and consumer decision making (Bolfing, 1988). Research has been done looking at involvement as affecting brand loyalty, information search, decision process complexity and the predictive ability of attitude models (Knox et al., 1994). Consumer involvement can be viewed as a trait, an individual state, a process, a mediator or a moderator (O’Cass, 2000). As a mediator, involvement is actually what is causing the relationship between the two other variables. As a moderator, involvement might influence the degree or direction of
the relationship, but is not responsible for causing the relationship. For the purpose of this study, involvement will be looked at as a moderating variable, which will be discussed further in the hypothesis development section.

The literature suggests that consumer involvement can have four forms. First, situational or purchase involvement is temporary or short-term and involves the context of the purchase decision situation. This temporary level of involvement is a consumer’s interest in making a brand selection and is the least lasting form of involvement as consumers only have a short-term degree of interest (Knox et al., 1994). Consumers may not even classify themselves as being involved in this decision (Broderick, Greenley & Mueller, 2007). The second dimension of involvement is enduring, or product involvement. This is a longer lasting form of involvement than situational. A consumer experiencing enduring involvement is interested in an object or event over a much longer period of time (Warrington & Shim, 2000). Enduring involvement is an individual difference variable the consumer brings with them to the decision experience (Richins, Bloch & McQuarrie, 1992). Levels of enduring involvement have also been looked at as something which develops through the process of purchasing and using a product (Knox et al., 1994). The main difference between situational involvement and enduring involvement is one of specificity. Both types of involvement reference a consumer’s perceived relevance but enduring involvement results from the relationship between the product and the consumer’s own values across all purchase situations (Celsi & Olson,
Situational involvement and enduring involvement act together to influence involvement responses, defined as the complexity of cognitive and other processes at various stages of the decision process (Houston & Rothschild, 1978). Situational involvement combines with pre-existing levels of enduring involvement to produce the involvement responses occurring in a given shopping situation (Richins, Bloch & McQuarrie, 1992).

The third dimension of involvement is normative involvement. This type of involvement relates to the importance of a product class to the consumer’s values, emotions, and ego (Rodgers & Schneider, 1993). This dimension is closely related to Laurent & Kepferer’s (1989) two dimensions of sign value (a product’s self expressive quality) and pleasure (or hedonic) value. This type of involvement has seen little empirical research. Normative involvement is measured as a function of expressive value, how well what you are buying expresses who you are (Broderick et al., 2004). In this way, it is not consistent with the type of involvement being measured in this study. We are concerned with the bride’s involvement with the decision making process, not how well the dress she buys expresses who she is. The fourth and final dimension of involvement is risk involvement. Risk involvement is the assessment of the importance and/or probability of risk associated with purchasing or consuming a product (McQuarrie & Munson, 1987). This type of consumer involvement has also seen little empirical research. Research has also been done classifying products themselves as being “high involvement” or “low involvement” (Cauberghe &
DePelsmacker, 2008). This classification is based on how much time and energy consumers generally use in purchasing the product in question, however this form of involvement will not be used for the current research.

Theorists have shown the relationship between level of consumer involvement and their decision making process. Both social judgement theory (Sherif & Hovland, 1961) and the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979) suggest that the level of consumer involvement affects how consumer’s process and interpret information they receive about a product. When purchasing a product they are highly involved in, the consumer will spend more time analyzing messages received about the product in order to develop their attitudes, beliefs and behavioral intentions (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979). On the other hand, when purchasing a product which requires low involvement, little time is spent analyzing messages received about the product. At this point, the consumer will rely more on heuristics, or cognitive shortcuts to determine the correct behavioral actions (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

2.4.2 Hedonic and Utilitarian Shopping Orientations

Traditional consumer behavior literature has focused primarily on what we now know as “utilitarian” aspect of shopping. Researchers were focused heavily on how consumers were able to get the job done when it came to shopping.
One of the primary schools of thought, the information processing model (Bettman, 1979) views the consumer as a rational problem solver while they are considering purchasing decisions. The basic premise of the information processing model is that the consumer has motivation to buy a product, pays attention to the alternatives available, seeks out and evaluates information about the product, makes a decision, then consumes the product (Bettman, 1979). This model has been shown to be effective in many different shopping situations, including the purchase of groceries, household goods, and some forms of technology (Babin, Darden & Griffin, 1994). Utilitarian based research has been classified as focusing on what is task-related and rational (Batra & Ahtola, 1990) and whether the consumer feels the mission was accomplished (Babin, Darden & Griffin, 1994).

While the Information Processing Model has been shown to be effective, some researchers have criticized it for not fully encompassing the shopping process. They wanted to see a model which allowed for the consumer to have an emotional role in the decision making process while shopping (Olshavsky & Granbois, 1979; Sheth, 1979; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). In their 1982 articles, Holbrook and Hirschman began the process of describing a new explanation of consumer decision making, the experiential view (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). This view of consumption is based off the idea that “People buy products not only for what they do, but also for what they mean” (Levy, 1959). This form of consumption would become known as hedonic consumption (Hirschman & Holbrook,
Hedonic consumption is essentially looking at the multi-sensory, fantasy and emotional aspects associated with a consumer’s experience with a product. These are the more intangible aspects, which are not considered in the more utilitarian view of the consumer decision making process. The end goal of hedonic consumption is enjoyment of the shopping experience. This goal, as compared to the more utilitarian goal of need satisfaction, is a regard for the experience itself without regard for whether it was functional or not. The hedonic consumer is more interested in the entertainment and enjoyment resulting from the shopping experience than a utilitarian shopper is (Childers, Carr, Peck & Carson, 2001).

Hedonic value can be described as shopper based (a shopper seeking pleasure from a product) or product based (products which are mainly consumed for pleasure) (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

Researchers have shown that hedonic and utilitarian values are not mutually exclusive but can be experienced within the same shopping situation (Batra & Ahtola, 1990; Jin, Sternquist & Koh, 2003). According to Batra & Ahtola (1990), “consumers purchase goods and services to perform consumption behaviors for two basic reasons: 1) consummatory affective (hedonic) gratification (from sensory attributes), and 2) instrumental, utilitarian reasons concerned with “expectations of consequences” (of a means-ends variety, from functional and non-sensory attributes)” (pg. 159). These shopping motivations can also be combined and experienced simultaneously (Jin, Sternquist & Kohl, 2003). In order to fully
understand why people shop, we need to consider both their hedonic as well as utilitarian motivations (Rintamaka, Kanto, Kuusela & Spence, 2006). An economist wrote “We use goods in two ways. We use goods as symbols of status and simultaneously as instruments to achieve some end-in-view” (Hamilton, 1987, p. 1541). This duality consumers can experience while shopping needs to be studied further.

2.5 Hypothesis Development

**H1-3: Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Playfulness and Store Satisfaction**

In the field of consumer research, a consumer’s attitude toward shopping has been extensively studied. Many studies have shown the relationship between a consumer’s attitude toward the shopping experience and their end satisfaction with the experience (Hansen et al., 2004). It is logical to connect these two variables; if a consumer has a positive attitude toward shopping, they are more likely to be satisfied with the process. Support for this idea is also found in the Theory of Reasoned Action, which states that a person’s attitude toward a behavior will explain their behavioral intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). In this same way, a bride’s attitude toward shopping for her wedding gown will help predict how satisfied with the store she was shopping at. Therefore the following hypothesis was developed:

**H1. Attitude will be positively related to store satisfaction.**
The subjective norm, which has been defined as a person’s belief about whether significant others think that he or she should engage in the behavior in question, will also relate to the person’s behavioral intention, according to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980; Weber et al., 2007). Specifically related to the bridal industry, the opinion of others is very important. According to a poll conducted by Conde Nast (2006), 66% of brides shop with an “entourage”, or other women such as their mothers, friends, or other important people. These people share their opinions with the bride, which can be wanted or unwanted. In some research settings, the subjective norm has played a more important role than the consumer’s own attitude (Gastil, 2000). These are likely to be situations where the opinion of significant others is valued more highly than the consumer’s own personal opinion. Bridal gowns may be one such scenario. Most brides come to a decision on which gown is “the gown” by a strategy of consensus with these significant others. This is likely in part because the bride may or may not be paying for their own gown. The same Conde Nast study found that only 37% of brides today pay for their own gown. Therefore, the opinion of others is going to make a big impact on how satisfied the bride is. If their mom, or bridesmaids are not happy with the store she chose to shop at, the bride will be pressured to feel the same way as well. However, if everyone is happy with a store, the bride will also feel happy with the store. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

**H2. Subjective norm will be positively related to store satisfaction.**
Perceived playfulness is the final predicting variable from the Theory of Reasoned Action. This variable is much more affective in nature, focusing on the enjoyment a consumer receives from the product, or the process of purchasing the product. Satisfaction is an emotional response to the disparity between perceived performance and a corresponding standard, with more positive affect leading to higher satisfaction. Many studies have shown that perceived playfulness have a direct and positive effect on satisfaction (Wirtz & Bateson, 1999; Oliver, 1993; Webster & Martocchio, 1992; Hsu & Chiu, 2004). These studies have shown a direct and significant impact from perceived playfulness to satisfaction (Hsu & Chiu, 2004). Researchers postulate that positive affect has a positive impact on behavioral intentions (Wirtz & Bateson, 1999). Accordingly, the following hypothesis was developed:

**H3.** Perceived playfulness will be positively related to store satisfaction.

**H4: Store Satisfaction and Purchase Intention**

The relationship between satisfaction and purchase intention has been thoroughly explored in the research. A study of similar variables, anticipated satisfaction and willingness to pay for the product showed a significant, positive relationship between the two. The higher the anticipated satisfaction, the more willing the consumer is to pay for the product (Jiang, 2002). Oliver (1980) also found
a direct and significant relationship between a consumers’ satisfaction and their intention to purchase a product. Brides who are happier with the store they went to shop for their gown may have higher intentions to purchase a gown during that specific shopping trip, or in future ones. If they were satisfied with the store, it is logical that they would want to take their business there and continue to be satisfied. Therefore, the following hypothesis is presented:

**H4. Store satisfaction will be positively related to purchase intention**

**H5 & 7: Moderating Relationship of Involvement**

Involvement is the level of relevance the consumer associates with a product or purchasing decision. This relevance is a result of the consumers’ needs, values and interests (Bauer, et al., 2006). Consumers will be more involved in the decision to purchase a product when they see that product as being more important or relevant to them (Bauer, et al., 2006). Bloch & Bruce (1984) found that involvement develops as the consumer experiences intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction due to interacting with the product in question. Products themselves are not inherently involving, consumers have the ability to become involved. This level of involvement will naturally fluctuate from consumer to consumer, and from product to product (Spangenberg, Voss & Crowley, 1997).
Studies have shown involvement to be a moderator between satisfaction and customer loyalty, a consumer behavior, or outcome (Olsen, 2007). In this way, satisfaction alone is not enough to predict whether a customer will return for a repeat purchase or not. The involvement factor has to be accounted for. If a customer is satisfied, but they do not see the salience of shopping at that particular store, or for that particular brand, they will not be as motivated to stay loyal. They may decide to try other brands or stores instead of returning to what they had before. In this way, both customer satisfaction and involvement are important considerations (Olsen, 2007).

In this way, it is logical that consumers would be more satisfied with the decision making process when they are more involved and investing more cognitive effort into it. Therefore, a moderating role for involvement will be investigated to see if a consumer’s level of involvement will have an impact on their store satisfaction. The hypotheses are only directed to attitude toward shopping and perceived playfulness due to the nature of the subjective norm. Because the subjective norm is how much other people have opinions, it does not seem to follow that the consumer’s level of involvement would make any difference on whether or not others have opinions about what they should buy. Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed:

**H5: Consumer involvement will moderate the relationship between attitude and store satisfaction.**
**H7**: Consumer involvement will moderate the relationship between perceived playfulness and store satisfaction.

**H6 & 8: Moderating Relationship of Consumer Shopping Motivations**

In the bridal industry, it is likely that brides are experiencing both hedonic and utilitarian shopping motivations simultaneously. There is a need to be met, buying a dress, which has a firm deadline, the wedding day. However, there is also the emotion wrapped up in finding “the dress” and experiencing the one shopping day she has dreamed of her whole life. This dichotomy between fantasy and need will be explored in this study by looking at a bride’s shopping motivations as a moderating variable.

Store satisfaction is the consumer’s level of satisfaction with the store where they purchased the product or service (Miller, 1976). A consumer who is motivated by utilitarian reasons is likely to experience the decision making process differently than a consumer motivated by hedonic reasons. A bride with an impending deadline, who is more likely to experience utilitarian motivations in order to “get the job done” may actually be less satisfied with her shopping experience, and therefore the store where she shopped at. This could be related to the amount of time she has spent dreaming about this experience since childhood. If she fantasized about wedding gown shopping, and then was forced into a situation that was much different that
her fantasy by budget restraints, timeline restrictions and pressures from family members (subjective norm), she may in turn be dissatisfied with the actual shopping experience, which would then reflect to the store she shopped at. On the other hand, a bride who is motivated to shop by the fantasy, and does not feel the pressures of the bride motivated by utilitarian reasons, may indeed achieve that dream shopping experience. For this reason, she may be much more satisfied with the store she shopped at because she was able to live out the fantasy aspect. Because consumer shopping motivation may have opposite effects on the shoppers, the following hypothesis was developed:

**H6:** Consumer shopping motivation will moderate the relationship between attitude and store satisfaction.

**H8:** Consumer shopping motivation will moderate the relationship between perceived playfulness and store satisfaction.
Figure 2.2 Study Model

Attitude

Subjective Norm

Perceived Playfulness

Consumer Motivation

Consumer Involvement

Store Satisfaction

Purchase Intention
CHAPTER 3. METHOD

3.1 Overview

The purpose of this study is to investigate the consumer behavior of brides while they are shopping for their wedding gown. More specifically, this study examines characteristics of the bride which makes her more satisfied with the store she is shopping in as well as more likely to purchase a gown from that store. To assess the shopping behavior of brides, hypotheses were tested based on data collected through a store intercept survey procedure while participants are actually shopping for wedding dresses. The specific methods used for this study are explained in this chapter.

3.2 Research Design

Survey methods were used to assess the shopping behavior of brides shopping for their wedding gown. The survey measured their attitude toward shopping for bridal gowns, the level of subjective norm they feel, their perceived level of playfulness, level of involvement in the process, whether they are motivated by utilitarian or hedonic reasons, their level of store satisfaction and their purchase intention.
3.3 Sample Selection

A convenience sample of brides who were shopping for wedding dresses at the time of data collection were recruited from three local bridal boutiques. The shops where participants were recruited from were Bride’s Corner in Cottage Grove, OR, The Bridal Loft in Portland, OR, as well as Fashion Expressions in Albany, OR with shop owner’s prior permission. Participants did not receive compensation for their participation. By surveying brides who are actively shopping for wedding gowns, we are able to elicit more “in-the-moment” responses, not having to rely on brides’ memories of their shopping trips. These brides were aware of what goes in to the process they are going through while shopping for “the dress”, and how they feel about it.

3.4 Instrument Development

The questionnaire consisted of five sections. The first section measured the consumers’ involvement with the actual shopping decision. Based on a scale developed by Zaichowsky (1985), participants were asked 20 semantic differential questions (see Table 3.1 for a summary of the variables measured). This scale has been widely used in involvement research and has received a Cronbach’s alpha score ranging from 0.95-0.99. The participants were asked to respond to the statements in regard to their experience shopping for a wedding gown.
The second section measured the three components of the Theory of Reasoned Action; attitude, subjective norm and perceived playfulness. To measure a bride’s attitude toward shopping for a wedding gown, three semantic differential statements were used based on statements from Bagozzi, Baumgartner & Yi (1992). The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale is 0.85. Subjective norm was measured using two five point Likert scales (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree), adapted from a scale used by Hansen, Jensen & Solgaard (2004). The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale is 0.82. To measure a bride’s perceived level of playfulness of the gown shopping experience, four five-point Likert scales (1=strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) were used, adapted from Davis (1989). The Cronbach’s alpha reliability score for this scale is 0.95.

The third section of the questionnaire measured the participants shopping motivations. To measure a bride’s utilitarian shopping motivation toward the gown shopping experience, 4 five point Likert scales (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) were used based on statements from Babin, Darden & Griffin (1994). The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale is 0.80. Secondly, hedonic shopping motivation was measured using a scale developed by Babin, Darden & Griffin (1994). This scale consisted of 11 five point Likert scale statements (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). The construct reliability for this scale is 0.93.

The fourth section of the questionnaire measured participant’s responses to the outcome variables, store satisfaction and purchase intention. Store satisfaction
was measured using five Likert-type statement (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) based on a statement used in previous studies (Miller, 1976). Purchase intention was measured on a likelihood scale (1=not very likely to 5=very likely) for one statement developed by the researcher, “How likely are you to purchase a wedding gown that you looked at today?”

Finally, the following demographic information was collected in the fifth section of the questionnaire: age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, income level, how many bridal stores they have visited while shopping for a wedding gown, and how many more months until their wedding. The question for how many stores they have visited was “How many bridal shops have you visited while shopping for a wedding gown?” The question for how many months until their wedding was “How much longer until your wedding?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Attitude**: Bagozzi, Baumgartner & Yi (1992) | 1. Pleasant/Unpleasant  
2. Good/Bad  
3. Favorable/Unfavorable | 0.85          |
| **Subjective Norm**: Hansen, Jensen & Solgaard (2004) | 1. Members of my family have an opinion about which bridal gown I should buy.  
2. Most of my friends have an opinion about which bridal gown I should buy. | 0.82          |
| **Perceived Playfulness**: Davis (1989) | 1. I found shopping for a bridal gown interesting.  
2. I found shopping for a bridal gown enjoyable.  
3. I found shopping for a bridal gown exciting.  
4. I found shopping for a bridal gown fun. | 0.95          |
| **Consumer Motivation**: Babin, Darden & Griffin (1994) | **Utilitarian Value**  
1. I accomplished what I wanted to while shopping for a wedding dress.  
2. I couldn’t buy what I really needed. (R)  
3. While shopping, I found the item I was looking for.  
4. I was disappointed because I had to go to other stores to complete my shopping. (R) | 0.80-0.93     |
| **Hedonic Value** | 1. Shopping for a bridal gown has truly been a joy.  
2. I continued to shop, not because I had to, but because I wanted to.  
3. Shopping for a bridal gown truly felt like an escape.  
4. Compared to other things I could have done, the time spent shopping for a bridal gown was truly enjoyable.  
5. I enjoyed being emerged in exciting new products.  
6. I enjoyed shopping for a bridal gown for its own sake, not just for the items I may have purchased.  
7. I had a good time because I was able to act on “the spur-of-the-moment”.  
8. While shopping, I felt the excitement of the hunt.  
9. While shopping, I was able to forget my problems.  
10. While shopping, I felt a sense of adventure.  
11. Shopping for a bridal gown was not a very nice time out. (R) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *Consumer Involvement* : Zaichowsky (1985) | 1. Important/Unimportant (R)  
2. Of no concern/Of concern to me  
3. Irrelevant/Relevant  
4. Means a lot to me/Means nothing to me (R)  
5. Useless/Useful  
6. Valuable/Worthless (R)  
7. Trivial/Fundamental  
8. Beneficial/Not beneficial (R)  
9. Matters to me/Doesn’t matter (R)  
10. Uninterested/Interested  
11. Significant/Insignificant (R)  
12. Vital/Superfluous (R)  
13. Boring/Interesting  
14. Unexciting/Exciting  
15. Appealing/Unappealing (R)  
16. Mundane/Fascinating  
17. Essential/Nonessential (R)  
18. Undesirable/Desirable  
19. Wanted/Unwanted (R)  
20. Not needed/Needed | 0.95-0.99 |

*Store Satisfaction* : Miller (1976)  
1. How satisfied are you with your shopping experience at this store? | N/A |

*Purchase Intention*  
1. How likely are you to purchase a wedding gown that you looked at today? | N/A |

Note. (R): reverse-scored

3.5 Procedure

This research was reviewed and approved by the Behavioral and Social Science Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Oregon State University (IRB research protocol #3842, see Appendix A). The data were collected during Winter Term 2008, over a 12 week period of time. The data were collected on Saturdays, which is the busiest shopping day for bridal stores. Participants were approached
while shopping in local bridal boutiques. Brides who were taking their time browsing through the store, or shopping with their friends were approached and asked to participate. They were read the following statement:

“Hello! My name is Jennifer Weiss and I am a graduate student from Oregon State University. I am interested in studying the decision process brides go through while shopping for their wedding gown. Would you have the time today to fill out a quick survey? It shouldn’t take more than 10 minutes of your time. All responses are anonymous and confidential. Thank you for your consideration!”

Brides who appeared to be in a hurry, or were in the store for only a short time may not have been approached and asked to participate. The brides were sometimes alone, but sometimes in a group of people when they were asked to participate in the survey. If they agree to participate, the brides were given a survey to fill out and return before they leave the shop. In all three shops, the researcher was allowed to use either a private room or table away from the selling floor to administer the surveys. All the participants were alone while filling out the survey. The participants were given the informed consent document as well as a paper copy of the survey. Consistency was achieved across the three different data collection locations. The researcher was either present during all data collection, or in the case of the Eugene location, the researcher provided data collection training to the store manager, who then administered the surveys to her customers.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

4.1 Overview

The purpose of this research was to investigate the consumer behavior of brides while they are shopping for their wedding gown. This study examined the effects of a bride’s attitude toward for shopping for a bridal gown, the subjective norm and perceived playfulness of shopping for a bridal gown on store satisfaction and purchase intention. Consumer involvement and shopping motivation were also examined as moderating variables. In this chapter, the demographic information of the participants were discussed first. Then, the inter-item reliability for the scales used was reported. Discussion of how the data were collected and compiled were then presented. The hypothesis testing were presented using regression statistics. Finally, the analysis of moderators were discussed, again using regression statistics. All statistical analysis was completed using the Stata Statistics Data Analysis program.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics

The demographic profile of the sample can be seen in Table 4.2. A total of 72 respondents elected to participate in the survey. Due to the nature of the data collection, in-store surveys, the response rate was 100%. Every bride who came in the store on the days the study was conducted was approached and asked to
participants in the survey agreed. All participants were female, again due to the nature of the product being shopped. Ages ranged from 19 to 40 years old, with the average age being 24 years old. In a nation-wide study conducted by Conde Nast (2007), the average age of brides was also 24 years old, which shows that the sample in this study is relevant to the population. 62.5% of respondents were between the ages of 21 and 24 years old. 97% of the sample reported as heterosexual, with only two respondents reporting as both heterosexual and homosexual. The respondents were 88.8% white, with 2.8% being black, African American, non-Hispanic, 5.6% being Asian American, and 2.8% being Hispanic American. The income level of the participants ranged from less than $14,999 to $90,000, with 30% falling into the less than $14,999 category, and 35% falling between $15,000 and $29,999. This could be due to the geographic area where the samples were collected. All three cities had a university in very close proximity if not in the same city. The average age puts many of these students around college-aged, which could mean they also have lower incomes. Participants were asked how many stores they have visited while shopping for their wedding gown. 55.56% of respondents had visited two or three stores while shopping. Finally, respondents were asked how much longer they had until their wedding. The average response was four to six months, which is consistent with how long it takes to order in a bridal gown at the three stores were participants were recruited. Industry statistics also show that the average US couple is engaged for a
year or less, which shows that the sample for this study were similar to the population as a whole (Conde Nast, 2007).

4.3 Inter-Item Reliability

To test the reliability of the scales used in the questionnaire, Cronbach’s Alphas were calculated. For attitude, the three items were reliable with an alpha of 0.92. The two subjective norm items were found to be reliable with an alpha of 0.81. For perceived playfulness, the four items were reliable with an alpha of 0.86. The involvement scale resulted in an alpha of 0.88, which is reliable. The four utilitarian shopping motivation items resulted in a reliability alpha of 0.63. This is not as high as we would have like to see, but since it is above 0.6, it will be acceptable to use for analysis (Nunnally, 1978). Finally, the 11 hedonic shopping motivation items were found to be reliable with an alpha of 0.88. As a result of these inter-item reliabilities, the scales were combined and averaged to form six individual variables.

Table 4.1 Inter-Item Reliability Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Norm</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Playfulness</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian Motivation</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonic Motivation</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2: Demographic Profile of the Sample ($N = 72$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptions</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 and under</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>(3.81)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>68.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older than 31</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexuality</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td>97.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
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<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>30.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 - $29,999</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 - $44,999</td>
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<td></td>
<td>22.22</td>
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<td>$75,000 - $89,999</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $90,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Stores Visited</strong></td>
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<td>2.99</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(1.46)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time Until Wedding</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-3 months</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 months</td>
<td>(1.05)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9 months</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12 months</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than a year</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Data Collection and Compilation

The data for this research were collected from three different locations. Bridal shops in Eugene, Portland and Albany graciously agreed to allow the researcher to survey their customers in a store intercept format. Because the data were collected from three different locations, statistical tests needed to be run to show that the data could be combined as one dataset and used accordingly. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to look at the independent variables (attitude, subjective norm and perceived playfulness) by location. The Wilks’s $\lambda$ was found to be insignificant, $\lambda = 1.08, F = 1.80, ns$. This shows that we can assume no systematic differences due to location. So the data from the three locations were combined and used for further analysis.

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Norm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Playfulness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian Motivation</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonic Motivation</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store Satisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 Hypothesis Testing

The proposed hypotheses were tested using regressions to evaluate the strength and direction of the relationships being considered.

Hypothesis 1-3: Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Playfulness to Store Satisfaction

Hypotheses 1-3 were tested using a stepwise multiple regression. In this analysis, the independent variables were attitude, subjective norm, and perceived playfulness, and the dependant variable was store satisfaction. The first hypothesis stated that attitude toward shopping for a bridal gown will be positively related to store satisfaction. The regression model for attitude as a predictor of store satisfaction is significant, $F(1, 70) = 14.20, p < .001$. The $r^2$ value for this relationship is $r^2 = 0.169$, which means that the consumer’s attitude toward shopping for a bridal gown explains 16.9% of the variance in their level of store satisfaction. This means that brides who have a more positive attitude toward shopping for gowns have a higher level of store satisfaction. See Table 4.4 for results. The positive beta also indicates the positive nature of the relationship between the two variables, attitude and store satisfaction, $\beta = 0.41, p < .001$. The formula for the regression line would be as follows: Store Satisfaction = 2.87 + .39 (attitude). This equation tells us that a person whose attitude score is 1 (the lowest possible score on the attitude scale)
would have a store satisfaction level of 3.26, slightly above the neutral point. Therefore, for each step up on the 5-point attitude scale, the score on store satisfaction increases by 0.39 on a 5-point scale. This is not a large amount of increase, however it is statistically significant. As a result, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Table 4.4 Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F (1, 70)</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>6.069</td>
<td>6.069</td>
<td>14.202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>29.917</td>
<td>0.427</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35.986</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² = 0.169

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p≤.05; **p≤.01; ***p≤.001.

β: Standardized Regression Coefficient
B: Unstandardized Regression Coefficient

The second hypothesis stated that subjective norm will be positively related to store satisfaction, and the third hypothesis stated that perceived playfulness will be positively related to store satisfaction. The stepwise regression showed that while attitude toward shopping for a gown is a significant predictor of store satisfaction, subjective norm and perceived playfulness are not significant predictors [subjective norm t (72 = .397, ns) and perceived playfulness t (72 = 1.253, ns)], so they are dropped from the model. The change in r² produced by adding these two predictors
to the model is not statistically significant, therefore only attitude remains. Therefore, there is no support for either Hypothesis 2 or 3.

_Hypothesis 4: Store Satisfaction to Purchase Intention_

The fourth hypothesis stated that store satisfaction will be positively related to purchase intention. A simple regression was used to test this relationship. The regression model for store satisfaction as a predictor of purchase intention is significant, \( F(1, 70) = 11.80, p < .001 \). This means that brides with higher levels of store satisfaction had higher purchase intentions than those with lower levels of store satisfaction. The \( r^2 \) value for this relationship is \( r^2 = 0.14 \), which means that the consumer’s level of store satisfaction explains 14% of the variance in their purchase intention. The beta value also indicates the positive relationship between store satisfaction and purchase intention, \( \beta = 0.38, p < .001 \). This shows that a bride with a higher level of store satisfaction will be have higher purchase intentions as well. The formula for the regression line would be as follows: Purchase Intention = 0.66 + .74 (store satisfaction). This equation tells us that a person whose store satisfaction score is 1 (the lowest possible store satisfaction store) would have a purchase intention level of 1.4, which is just above the lowest score for purchase intention. A bride with an average level of store satisfaction \( (M = 3.96) \) would have a purchase intention score of 3.59. According to the regression formula, for each step up on the
5-point store satisfaction scale, the score on purchase intention increases by .74 on a 5-point scale, which is statistically significant. As a result, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

*Hypothesis 5 & 7: Consumer Involvement Moderation*

The fifth hypothesis stated that consumer involvement will moderate the relationship between attitude and store satisfaction. The seventh hypothesis stated that consumer involvement will moderate the relationship between perceived playfulness and store satisfaction. To test these hypotheses, nested regression was used. According to Cohen, Cohen, West and Aiken (2003), moderators are statistically analyzed as an interaction variable. The presence of moderating effects was identified as the nested regression found the interaction terms to be significant. To look further at the influence of the moderators, a simple slope analysis was used, as suggested by Acock (2006). This analysis looks at the slope of the regression of a dependent variable on an independent variable at a single value of the moderator (Aiken & West, 1991; Park, Burns, & Rabolt, 2007). Using the simple slope analysis, a series of simple regression equations of a dependant variable on an independent variable at specific values of the moderators are generated, allowing a better understanding of the nature of the moderation. For this study, the specific values of the moderator used are 1) the mean of the moderator, 2) one standard deviation
above the mean of the moderator, and 3) one standard deviation below the mean of the moderator. This is as suggested by Acock (2006).

To look at the moderating relationship of consumer involvement, a nested regression was used. See Table 4.5 for results. The results show that the $F$ test was significant for the model, $F(6, 65) = 4.73, p<.001$. This indicates that the model is a good fit for the data. The interaction effect of involvement on the attitude–store satisfaction relationship is found to be significant, $t(1, 70) = -0.53, p<.05$. This means that a significant moderating relationship exists for involvement to the attitude–store satisfaction relationship. The beta value for this interaction is -0.296 which indicates the negative nature of the interaction relationship. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is supported. In order to further understand this moderation of consumer involvement on the attitude–perceived playfulness relationship, a simple slope analysis was conducted (See Table 4.6). Simple slopes 1, 2 and 3 indicate the regressions of store satisfaction on attitude toward shopping for a bridal gown at one standard deviation above the mean, at the mean, and below the mean of consumer involvement. The results of the simple slope analysis show that for a consumer who scored low on the attitude scale, the coefficients for involvement were low, moderate, and high respective to one standard deviation below the mean, at the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean. Conversely, for a consumer who scored high on the attitude scale, the coefficients for involvement were high, moderate, and low, respectively (See Table 4.6). This means that for consumers who
had a low level of involvement, as their attitude toward shopping for a bridal gown became more positive, store satisfaction increased as well. For consumers with a high level of involvement, as their attitude toward shopping for a bridal gown became more positive, store satisfaction decreased. For a graphical representation, see Figure 4.1.
Table 4.5 Nested Regression Results – Store Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.49***</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>4.58***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>0.26***</td>
<td>0.14 0.27</td>
<td>0.21 0.14 0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Norm</td>
<td>0.05 0.07 0.08</td>
<td>0.02 0.08 0.04</td>
<td>0.09 0.08 0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Playfulness</td>
<td>0.19 0.14 0.2</td>
<td>-0.62 1.06 -0.66</td>
<td>-0.97 1.22 -1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>-0.24 1.03 -0.19</td>
<td>1.2 1.53 0.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude X Involvement</td>
<td>-0.53* 0.26 0.19</td>
<td>-0.08 0.32 -0.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playfulness X Involvement</td>
<td>0.16 0.25 1.04</td>
<td>-0.17 0.38 -1.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.75 0.84 -0.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude X Utilitarian</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.31 0.22 -0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playfulness X Utilitarian</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.18 0.2 1.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonic Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.92 1.05 -0.97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude X Hedonic</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.38 0.22 -0.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playfulness X Hedonic</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.22 0.24 1.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference in R²</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F for change in R²</td>
<td>5.42**</td>
<td>3.46*</td>
<td>2.31*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p≤.05; **p≤.01; ***p≤.001.
Table 4.6 Simple Slope Analysis – Store Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Slope Coefficient</th>
<th></th>
<th>Slope Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$F$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$F$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Low Involvement</td>
<td>4.73***</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>4.73***</td>
<td>5.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.57)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mean Involvement</td>
<td>4.73***</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>4.73***</td>
<td>4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. High Involvement</td>
<td>4.73***</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>4.73***</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.57)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$; ***$p \leq .001$.

Figure 4.1 Moderation of Involvement on Attitude – Store Satisfaction

The regression output for the t-test for the moderation of consumer involvement on the perceived playfulness – store satisfaction relationship was not significant, $t (1, 70) = 0.16, ns$. As a result, Hypothesis 7 is not supported.
**Hypothesis 6 & 8: Shopping Motivation Moderation**

Hypothesis 6 stated that shopping motivation will moderate the relationship between attitude toward shopping for a bridal gown and store satisfaction. The eighth hypothesis stated that shopping motivation will moderate the relationship between perceived playfulness and store satisfaction. The same nested regression analysis method was used to test Hypotheses 6 and 8 as was discussed above. The two shopping motivations, utilitarian motivation and hedonic motivations were analyzed as separate moderating variables in order to determine which motivation had the moderating effect.

The results show that the $F$ test was significant for the model, $F (12, 59) = 3.81, p<.001$. This indicates that the model is a good fit for the data (see Table 4.5). The t-test results for the moderation of utilitarian motivation on the attitude – store satisfaction relationship was not significant, $t (1, 70) = -1.41, ns$. The t-test results for the moderation of hedonic motivation on the attitude – store satisfaction relationship was not significant, $t (1, 70) = -0.38, ns$. As a result, Hypothesis 6 is not supported. The t-test results for the moderation of utilitarian motivation on the perceived playfulness – store satisfaction relationship was not significant, $t (1, 70) = 0.18, ns$. The t-test results for the moderation of hedonic motivation on the perceived playfulness – store satisfaction relationship was not significant, $t (1, 70) = 0.22, ns$. Therefore, Hypothesis 8 is not supported.

For a summary of all significant hypotheses, see Figure 4.1.
Figure 4.2 Model With Significant Relationships

- Attitude
- Subjective Norm
- Perceived Playfulness
- Consumer Motivation
- Consumer Involvement
- Store Satisfaction
- Purchase Intention

H1 ***
H2
H3
H4 ***
H5 *
H6
H7
H8
5.1 Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate the consumer behavior of brides while they are shopping for their wedding gown. This study examined the effects of a bride’s attitude toward shopping for a bridal gown, the subjective norm and perceived playfulness of shopping for a bridal gown on store satisfaction and purchase intention. Consumer involvement and shopping motivation were also examined as moderating variables. Store intercept surveys were conducted at multiple bridal stores to collect data from the real brides who are currently shopping for their wedding gown. The results indicated several positive, significant relationships between the variables examined. This chapter discussed the empirical findings of this thesis research. Managerial implications and contributions were also discussed for both retailers and the bridal industry in general.

5.2 General Discussion

The Relationship between Attitude and Store Satisfaction

As hypothesized, the relationship between attitude and store satisfaction was significant and positive. The more positive (or higher scoring) the bride’s attitude toward shopping for a bridal gown, the more satisfied she was with the store she
These findings are consistent with several studies which have found attitude to be the most significant predictor of behavioral intentions of the three independent variables in the Theory of Reasoned Action (Hansen et al., 2004). The participants in this study generally had a very positive attitude toward shopping for bridal gowns ($M = 4.10$, on a 5-point scale) and also a fairly high store satisfaction rating ($M = 3.96$, on a 5-point scale). Therefore, it follows that brides’ who held high opinions of shopping were going to have had a good experience at the store. If they had a lower store satisfaction score, we would expect that a poor attitude toward shopping would be one predictor of this result.

It would be interesting to consider whether the relationship between attitude and store satisfaction is uni-directional or more cyclical in nature. A bride may have an attitude about gown shopping already established before she enters a store, or the attitude may come as a result of her experience within the store. In the bridal shopping situation of today, brides are able to have access to a plethora of mass media resources. They may look at online ratings of bridal stores before they even set foot inside a store, to see if it would be worth their time going there. Word-of-mouth could also play an influence on a bride’s attitude being established before she even ventures on a shopping trip. Her attitude may vary based on the prior experiences of her friends, and whether she has ever been shopping with a friend or relative while they were shopping for their own gown. However, other brides may base their attitude toward shopping on their experiences within the bridal stores alone. They may not have any preset attitudes before they shop. Future research
could look at whether the attitude precedes the satisfaction, or whether satisfaction precedes the attitude.

The Relationship between Subjective Norm and Store Satisfaction

Unexpectedly, the regression results for this study showed no significant relationship between subjective norm and store satisfaction. This finding is in contrast with several research studies which found subjective norm to be a significant predictor of behavioral intention, sometimes even more significant than attitude (Weber et al., 2007; Gastil, 2000). There are several possible explanations why this relationship was not found to be significant.

First, the mean score on the subjective norm scale was \( M = 3.57 \), on a 5-point scale, which is a fairly marginal score. The questions the participants were asked were about whether family members and friends have opinions about which gown they should buy. “Members of my family have an opinion about which bridal gown I should buy” and “Most of my friends have an opinion about which bridal gown I should buy.” With an average score in between strongly disagree and strongly agree, this shows that participants’ family and friends may not have had a strong opinion about which gown the bride should purchase. This could be related to a shift in expectations of the “modern bride.” As women are becoming more independent, they may value the opinion of others less. Also, according to a recent study of engaged women, only 41\% of bride’s parents pay for the wedding (Conde Nast,
2007). If a bride is paying for the gown herself, she may be less concerned with the opinion of others, and place more importance on her own likes and dislikes. Therefore, the subjective norm may not be a significant variable.

Another possible explanation for why the subjective norm – store satisfaction relationship was not significant is the specific questions used in the questionnaire. The participants were asked “Members of my family have an opinion about which bridal gown I should buy” and “Most of my friends have an opinion about which bridal gown I should buy.” These questions relate more specifically to the gown tried on or purchased more so than to the store they were shopping in. The connection between a family member’s or friend’s opinion of a gown may not translate to whether they liked the store or not. In this case, a relationship between the two variables may not make sense.

The Relationship between Perceived Playfulness and Store Satisfaction

The relationship between perceived playfulness and store satisfaction was not significant in this study, which is counter to what was hypothesized. This was surprising considering the mean score on the perceived playfulness scale ($M = 4.19$ on a 5-point scale). It seems that most brides find the process of shopping for a wedding gown to be enjoyable. The hypothesis was supported by research showing a direct and positive relationship between perceived playfulness and satisfaction (Wirtz & Bateson, 1999; Oliver, 1993; Webster & Martocchio, 1992), so it was
surprising to see the relationship not supported in this study. A few explanations for this occurrence are explored.

The first reason for this unexpected result may be the lack of variance in responses. The average score on the perceived playfulness scale was $M = 4.19$ on a 5-point scale, with a standard deviation of only 0.75. This means that 66% of respondents scored between 3.44 and 4.94. Generally, participants found shopping for bridal gowns to be inherently enjoyable in and of itself. If most of the participants found it to be enjoyable, then it would make sense that a statistically significant predictor relationship would be less likely to be found for store satisfaction.

The lack of significant relationship may also be related again to the store satisfaction variable, where brides do not see a connection between how enjoyable shopping for a bridal gown is with how satisfied they are with the store they shopped at. As discussed earlier, the majority of brides surveyed found shopping for a bridal gown very enjoyable, with a high level of perceived playfulness. However these questions did not relate directly to the store they were shopping at, but more toward the entire shopping process in general. The average bride in this study shopped at three different stores, so their level of perceived playfulness may or may not have been directly from the store in which they were surveyed. This is not as likely as the previous explanation because the store satisfaction to purchase intention in this store was a significant relationship, but it is worth considering that the consumption process for brides extends beyond their experience in just one store. In a recent
study of the average bride in America, researchers found that the average bride reads 13.5 bridal magazines during her engagement and spends twice as many hours online each week as compared to her single counterpart (Conde Nast, 2007). Therefore, the bridal shopping experience encompasses much more than the specific stores the brides are shopping at, so their origin of perceived playfulness must be considered accordingly. These limitations and others to this study are discussed further in the Conclusion chapter.

The Relationship between Store Satisfaction and Purchase Intention

As hypothesized, the relationship between store satisfaction and purchase intention was significant and positive. This means that a bride who is more satisfied with the store is more likely to purchase from this same store. This is a very logical result, as consumers tend to want to take their money to businesses where they are getting the products they want from a business they feel comfortable supporting. The significant result is also consistent with previous studies, which show that satisfaction levels are a very strong predictor of behavioral intention (Jiang, 2002; Oliver, 1980). These studies have shown that regardless of the type of satisfaction being considered, whether be overall satisfaction (Oliver, 1980), purchase satisfaction (Jiang, 2002), decision satisfaction (Fitzsimons, Greenleaf, & Lehmann, 1997), or store satisfaction (Miller, 1976), a relationship is found with behavioral intention. Therefore it is no surprise that this result was also found in this research. The results of this study continue to further the notion that satisfaction and
behavioral intention are very closely related, that one can be a significant predictor of the other.

*The Moderating Relationship of Consumer Involvement*

The current study found a significant moderating relationship of consumer involvement on the attitude to store satisfaction relationship. A moderating relationship means that one independent variable interacts with another independent variable in predicting the dependant variable. Therefore, the effect of each can be said to be conditional on the other (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003). In the context of this study, when consumer involvement was considered, the relationship between attitude and store satisfaction changed based on the respondent’s level of involvement. The results show that for a consumer who experiences a low level of involvement, for example, one standard deviation below the mean, their level of store satisfaction increases greatly as their attitude becomes more positive (4.34 points to 5.1 points on a 5-point scale). Level of involvement is defined as “the extent to which consumers’ product knowledge is related to their self-knowledge about desirable values and needs” (Knox et al., 1994), or simplified, how important a consumer believes a product to be. So a consumer experiencing a lower level of involvement in this study would find shopping for a bridal gown to be less important than the average bridal consumer. It makes sense that a bride who does not find the gown shopping process important, as her attitude toward shopping
becomes more positive, her level of satisfaction with the store increases as well. This is consistent with findings from the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann, 1983) which suggests that consumers process a persuasive message regarding a purchase decision in one of two ways. Either they process through a direct route, where they consider everything involved in the persuasive message very carefully, or through a peripheral route, where the consumer is not interested in the content of the persuasive message, and therefore turns to other peripheral cues to make their purchase decision. The difference between consumers who take these different routes is level of involvement (Canary, Cody & Manusov, 2003). A consumer who is less involved with a purchase decision is more likely to use peripheral routes to persuasion than a consumer is highly involved. In the context of the present study, a bride who is less involved with the purchase decision of buying a bridal gown is more likely to use peripheral cues to determine how satisfied they are with the store they are shopping at, as dictated by their attitude while they are shopping. Peripheral cues may be things like the location of the store, the selection of other items which need to be purchased, or the opinions of other brides she may know.

The moderation continues as we look at a bride who was average on the involvement scale. The results show that for a bride who had an average score on the involvement scale, at the mean, their level of store satisfaction increased as their attitude toward shopping for a bridal gown became more positive, however not as rapidly as for a consumer with low involvement (4.46 to 4.74 on a 5-point scale). We
notice here that the score did not start out as low as the line did for a bride with low involvement, which means that brides with average involvement tended to have higher store satisfaction in general. It again is logical that as a bride’s attitude toward shopping for a bridal gown became more positive, they also became more satisfied with the store at which they were shopping. If they feel positive about the shopping process, then they are more likely to feel the same toward the store, or the medium which they are shopping through.

Finally, looking at a bride who scored high on involvement, we can see the effects of the moderation very clearly. For a bride who had a high score on involvement, one standard deviation above the mean, their level of store satisfaction decreased as their attitude toward shopping for a bridal gown became more positive (4.51 to 4.38 on a 5-point scale). These results are very interesting, as the direction of slope changed for just this one group of consumers. Again, the Elaboration Likelihood Model can provide an explanation for this finding (Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann, 1983). Consumers who are experiencing high levels of involvement are more likely to analyze everything about the shopping situation, especially the persuasive messages they are receiving while shopping. Therefore, they are more likely to pick up on small nuances that make them unhappy, or have had unrealistic expectations for the shopping experience from the start. This could be related to the amount of fantasy experienced by the bride. If she has dreamed about shopping for a wedding gown since she was a little girl, she may actually be disappointed by how “normal” the experience can be, as compared with shopping for other garments.
Because her expectations for the shopping experience may have been too high to begin with, she may be less satisfied with the store and how the consumption process actually took place.

The moderation of consumer involvement on the perceived playfulness to store satisfaction relationship was not found to be significant in the present research. This is most likely due to the insignificant direct relationship found between perceived playfulness and store satisfaction. If a consumer’s level of perceived playfulness is not a good predictor of their level of store satisfaction, then it is logical that the level of involvement in the shopping process will not make a difference. Therefore, hypothesis seven was not supported.

The Moderating Relationship of Consumer Shopping Motivations

Unexpectedly, neither hypothesis was supported regarding the moderating relationship of consumer shopping motivations on either the attitude to store satisfaction relationship or the perceived playfulness to store satisfaction relationship. This was surprising considering the theoretical basis on which the hypotheses were developed. Research has shown typically two types of shoppers, those who are motivated by utilitarian reasons and those motivated by hedonic reasons (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Typically, the consumer behavior for these two types of shoppers has been found to be different. Therefore, it was expected that brides who are motivated by utilitarian reasons
would have different attitudes and levels of perceived playfulness than brides who are motivated by hedonic reasons. However, this was not supported by the data.

An explanation for this result could be the dual nature of consumers. Past research has shown that both shopping motivations can be experienced within the same shopping situation (Batra & Ahtola, 1990; Jin, Sternquist & Koh, 2003). Brides in this study were fairly equal in what type of shopper they were. The mean score for utilitarian motivation was $M = 4.03$, on a 5-point scale, which means they were fairly motivated by utilitarian reasons. The mean score for hedonic motivation was $M = 3.57$, which again means that the brides were somewhat motivated by hedonic reasons. The lack of dichotomy in these findings may be why consumer shopping motivation was not a significant moderator in this study. If brides scored reasonably high on both utilitarian and hedonic shopping motivations, there would have been no difference to look at in comparing the two types of shoppers. This is an interesting addition to consumer behavior literature in that it appears that for the bridal industry, based on the findings of this study, consumers are generally highly motivated by both utilitarian and hedonic reasons.

5.3 Managerial Implications of this Study

A few implications for bridal retailers are found in the results of this study. First, as confirmed by many other studies in the past, the relationship between store satisfaction and purchase intention is highly significant. This places a lot of
responsibility on store owners and managers to make sure their customers are happy and treated well. This study shows that customers who are satisfied have a much higher intention to purchase products from that store. If managers want a surefire way to increase business, or to keep sales at a high level, focusing on providing what their customer wants, and treating them in a way that leaves them happy can provide tangible results. In bridal retailing where a lot of time, energy and money is being spent on the big day, brides want to shop at a store they trust and with a salesperson who respects them and allows them to live out their fantasy. This is key for retailers and managers to understand.

Another managerial implication found in this study is being able to manage the expectations of the brides as they shop. Satisfaction is a result of consumer evaluation of their perception of service in comparison to their expectation. Again, because there is so much fantasy and time spent dreaming involved in the bridal gown shopping process, brides may have an unrealistic expectation as to what shopping will be like. They may become disillusioned when they realize how their budget constraints may affect whether they can have their dream dress, or that the ordering process is actually about 5 months long. This disappointment with the shopping experience may transfer to the store. A bride may not be able to understand how unrealistic her expectations were to begin with, and therefore blame the store. If a manager is able to be honest and upfront with a bride right from the beginning about what the gown purchasing process will entail, they may be better able to manage these expectations, and maintain higher levels of store
satisfaction which accurately represent the experience the bride had in the store.

Therefore, in order to manage store satisfaction, it is critical for bridal shops to manage their customers’ expectations.

Future research is needed to discover exactly what aspects are important to brides as they shop in order to be more helpful to store owners and managers. Ideas for future research and limitations of the study will be discussed in the Conclusion chapter.
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

6.1 General Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the consumer behavior of brides who were shopping for their wedding gowns. The factors considered were a brides’ attitude toward shopping for a wedding gown, the subjective norm she experienced, the level of perceived playfulness she found the shopping to have, the level of store satisfaction she experienced with the store where the surveys were conducted, and their purchase intentions from that same store. Consumer involvement and consumer shopping motivations (utilitarian vs. hedonic) were examined as moderating variables in the relationships between attitude and store satisfaction and perceived playfulness and store satisfaction.

The results of the study show that a bride’s attitude toward shopping is a significant predictor of her level of store satisfaction. The subjective norm and level of perceived playfulness were not significant predictors. Store satisfaction was significant and positively related to purchase intention, as predicted. Consumer involvement was found to be a moderating variable on the relationship between attitude and store satisfaction. Involvement did not moderate the relationship between perceived playfulness and store satisfaction. Utilitarian shopping motivations did not moderate either the relationship between attitude and store satisfaction or the relationship between perceived playfulness and store satisfaction.
Likewise, hedonic shopping motivations did not moderate either the relationship between attitude toward shopping for a bridal gown and store satisfaction or the relationship between perceived playfulness and store satisfaction. The implications of this study were applied and discussed to managerial situations.

6.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

A few conditions serve as limitations for this research study. First, as with any study using a sample, the findings may not be generalizable to the entire population. The participants in this study do not represent an accurate view of the population, based on the demographics. The brides surveyed for this study tended to be average age, compared with industry research, (mean age = 24; Conde Nast, 2007), with a lower level of income (average income = $15,000 - $30,000), and a majority were Caucasian. This is not representative of the population of brides in America. These results then are not necessarily applicable to the entire population because it does not account for differences in age, income or ethnicity. Also, the three stores surveyed were all located in Oregon, which does not account for regional differences which may occur. It would be beneficial to repeat this study in different regions of the country, where a greater diversity of brides are located as well, to see if the findings still hold true. The sample size for the survey (N = 72) may also be considered a limitation. Repeating the study with more participants would be recommended for future researchers.
A second limitation of the study comes from the stores in which the surveys were conducted. Two of the three stores sell merchandise at the moderate price point, above budget but below designer or bridge. The third store was a custom design store, catering to higher income individuals, or brides with parents of a higher income. The research did not take into account brides who shop at a more budget price point. This budget restriction may influence how a bride shops and what is important to her. Future research contrasting the shopping behavior of brides shopping at different price points would greatly add to the literature developing in this area.

A last limitation to this study could be the purpose of the store visits of the brides surveyed. The intent of the research was to survey brides who were shopping for their wedding gown. However, during the course of the research it became apparent that some of the brides surveyed were coming back to the store they purchased their gowns at to make a payment, have a fitting, purchase bridesmaids dresses or purchase accessories to go with her gown. All the brides had purchased their gowns at the store where they were surveyed; however they may or may not have been shopping for their gown at the time of the survey. This may have affected the results of the study, however due to time and resource constraints needed to be overlooked. Future studies could include a screening question in order to assure that the bride being surveyed is actually shopping for her wedding gown.
Future research is needed to continue this line of inquiry. As stated in the Introduction, limited research is available concerning the consumer behavior of brides. This is an important industry and one that is somewhat of an anomaly as far as traditional consumer behavior research is concerned. The results of this study show some differences between brides’ and traditional apparel consumers, but a surprising amount of similarities as well. Further studies looking into the true nature of a bridal consumer would be useful to determine whether bridal gown shopping is truly a unique consumption situation or not. It would also be helpful for future studies to look more into the characteristics of the brides being studied such as whether she has a budget for her wedding gown, or for her wedding in general, how they learned about the store they are shopping in, how many bridal magazines they read, and how much time they spend looking at wedding related websites online. By attaining more information about the bride herself, better explanations may be made about why the results hold true for the sample studied. Future studies to look into why a bride chooses a specific gown, what factors at the store make her more satisfied with the retailer, how the internet is playing a role in bridal gown shopping and how fashion innovativeness and adoption affect the bridal industry could be future subject areas. Bridal is an exciting and growing industry that needs theory to help guide it through its growth.


APPENDIX A

IRB Informed Consent

and Approval Page
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
You are being invited to take part in this study of bridal consumer behavior. This study is intended for research by the student researcher. We are specifically interested in what influences the bride while shopping for a bridal gown. The hypothesis is that consumers will respond more favorably when they are enjoying their shopping experience. This study is intended for use in the student researcher’s thesis as well as for ITAA (International Textiles and Apparel Association) presentation and publication. We are studying this because findings from this study may be useful for developing marketing strategies for bridal retailers, and textile and clothing areas, and it is also helpful for your bridal shopping experiences.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?
This consent form gives you the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to participate in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions via email or telephone call about the research, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to participate in this study.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
You are being invited to take part in this study because you are a bridal consumer and 18 years of age or older. You must be 18 years of age or older as well as a bride to participate in this study. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question or stop the survey at any time.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?
If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in a short survey. This survey will present several questions. If you agree to take part in this study, your participation will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?
There are no foreseeable risks associated with your participation in the study.
WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?
There are no direct benefits to participants. In the future, we hope that other people might benefit from this study because the results will help bridal retailers as well as manufacturers learn how to create the shopping experience their customers want. In addition, we hope you find the study interesting.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?
You will not be paid for participating. You may be eligible to be entered into a raffle drawing for your participation. The drawing is for a small prize and the winner will be drawn at the end of the data collection for the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?
The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. To help protect your confidentiality, nowhere on the survey asks for any identifying information. Also, all information collected will be securely locked in a filing cabinet and out of view to the public. If the results of this project are published, identities will not be published and results will be presented in an aggregate form so individual responses are not given.

DO I HAVE A CHOICE TO BE IN THE STUDY?
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering. You are free to skip any question you prefer not to answer. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected from you and this information may be included in study reports.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?
If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Minjeong Kim at (541) 737-3468 or by email at Minjeong.kim@oregonstate.edu as well as Jennifer Weiss at (541) 737-0991 or by email at weissje@onid.orst.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541) 737-4933 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu.
APPENDIX B

Survey Questionnaire
Bridal Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation in this study! Please take the next few moments to answer the following questions. Please see the researcher if you have any questions.

1. Please rate your bridal gown shopping experience along the following characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of no concern</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Of concern to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means a lot to me</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Means nothing to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useless</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuable</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Worthless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trivial</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Fundamental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficial</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Not beneficial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matters to me</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Doesn’t matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninterested</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Insignificant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vital</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Superfluous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexciting</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Exciting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appealing</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Unappealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mundane</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Fascinating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Nonessential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undesirable</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Unwanted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not needed</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Please respond to the following questions.

Shopping for a bridal gown is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unpleasant</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
<th>Pleasant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavorable</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Favorable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Please rate your bridal gown shopping experience by answering the following questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Members of my family have an opinion about which bridal gown I should buy.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Most of my friends have an opinion about which bridal gown I should buy.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I accomplished what I wanted while shopping for a wedding dress.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I couldn’t buy what I really needed.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. While shopping, I found the item I was looking for.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I was disappointed because I had to go to other stores to complete my shopping.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Shopping for a bridal gown has truly been a joy</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I continued to shop, not because I had to, but because I wanted to.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Shopping for a bridal gown truly felt like an escape.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Compared to other things I could have done, the time spent shopping for a bridal gown was truly enjoyable.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I enjoyed being emerged in exciting new products.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I enjoyed shopping for a bridal gown for its own sake, not just for the items I may have purchased.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I had a good time because I was able to act on “the spur-of-the-moment”.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. While shopping, I felt the excitement of the hunt.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. While shopping, I was able to forget my problems.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. While shopping, I felt a sense of adventure.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Shopping for a bridal gown was not a very</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
nice time out.

| 18. I found shopping for a bridal gown interesting. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I found shopping for a bridal gown enjoyable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I found shopping for a bridal gown exciting. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. I found shopping for a bridal gown fun. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

4. Please respond to the following questions.

A. How satisfied are you with your shopping experience at this store?

Extremely Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Satisfied

B. How likely are you to purchase a wedding gown that you looked at today?

Very Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 Very Likely

5. Please answer a few questions about yourself.

What is your age? _______________

What is your sexual orientation?
Heterosexual
Homosexual
Both

What is your ethnicity?
White, European American, Non-Hispanic
Black, African American, Non-Hispanic
Asian American
Middle Eastern
Pacific Islander
North African
Hispanic American
American Indian, Alaskan Native
Other, please specify ________________________________________________________

What is your income level?
Less than $14,999
$15,000 - $29,999
$30,000 - $44,999
$45,000 - $59,999
$60,000 - $74,999
$75,000 - $89,999
More than $90,000

How many stores have you visited while shopping for a wedding gown?
1
2
3
4
5
More than 5

How much longer until your wedding?
0-3 months
4-6 months
7-9 months
10-12 months
More than a year
Wedding date not yet set.

Thank you very much for participating! Good luck as you continue wedding gown shopping! Please return the survey to the researcher.