



# With or without you: The positive and negative influence of retail companions<sup>☆</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This study evaluates whether the influence of shopping with a companion is consistent across retail contexts with service components or between genders. An experiment asked participants to recall and evaluate their most recent solo or joint restaurant or shopping experience. Results demonstrate that for restaurant experiences, there is a positive influence of others on individual time spent, money spent, satisfaction, and attitude toward the act. For shopping experiences, however, these effects were either strengthened or reversed dependent upon gender. For (males) females, joint shopping experiences are linked to (increased) decreased amount paid, attitude toward the act, and re-patronage intentions.

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## 1. Introduction

A friend or family member who accompanies a customer has been referred to as a purchase-pal (e.g., Bell, 1967) or a companion shopper (e.g., Lindsey-Mullikin and Munger, 2011). Research on these retail companions suggests that consumers are motivated to shop with others primarily for social motivations (e.g., company) or for assistance motivations (e.g., product expertise) (Hartman and Kiecker, 1991). Supporting the notion that retail companions satisfy individual motivations are findings which show that shopping with others has a positive influence on individual shopper behavior and satisfaction (e.g., Bell et al., 2011; Granbois, 1968; Kiecker and Hartman, 1993, 1994; Sommer et al., 1992; Woodside and Sims, 1976). Though previous findings are consistent, several questions remain. It is not clear whether the influences of a companion are consistent across retail contexts, include attitudinal components, or are equal between genders. In a broader sense, it is uncertain whether the influence of a companion on individual retail outcomes is even consistently positive. The present study evaluated these possibilities in solo and joint restaurant and shopping experiences. This investigation reveals that joint restaurant experiences are linked to increased individual time spent, money spent, satisfaction, and attitude toward the act. Critically, the valence of influence that a companion had on individual shopping experiences depended upon gender. Contrary to our expectations, for (males) females, joint

shopping experiences were linked to (increased) decreased amount paid, attitude toward the act, and re-patronage intentions. The related theoretical background, method, and implications are developed in the proceeding sections.

## 2. Review of the literature

Most retail research concerns the interactions between a company and its individual customers (Tsiros and Parasuraman, 2006). This research has largely foregone questions related to customer–customer relationships while focusing on firm–customer relationships (Verhoef et al., 2009). Though these studies are helpful in their control of social variables during firm–customer investigations, the reality of retail settings is one in which individuals are frequently influenced by other consumers and/or are acting jointly with them (Bagozzi, 2000).

Within the developing body of customer–customer literature, the influence of other customers is often examined from the friend/family perspective (i.e., purchase-pal, Bell, 1967; companion shopper, Lindsey-Mullikin and Munger, 2011). In total, companion shoppers have been shown to increase individual time spent (Granbois, 1968; Sommer et al., 1992), money spent (Bell et al., 2011; Granbois, 1968; Sommer et al., 1992; Woodside and Sims, 1976), and confidence (Kiecker and Hartman, 1994) while also reducing perceptions of purchase risk (Kiecker and Hartman, 1993). These studies motivate a series of hypotheses that we explore in the present study. We present each in sequence below, along with a brief background review for each. Some of these serve to replicate common findings in this literature in previously

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unexplored contexts. Others—primarily those of satisfaction, attitude, re-patronage, and gender—serve to extend our knowledge of the role of social variables in joint consumer experiences.

### 2.1. Time spent

**H1.** Consumer experience while (a) shopping and (b) patronizing a restaurant with a companion will be associated with greater time spent compared to the experience solo.

Though retail research has not demonstrated that having a companion increases time spent in a restaurant setting, the most central and common finding related to companions in retail settings is that companions increase the amount of time spent while shopping (e.g., Bell et al., 2011; Granbois, 1968; Sommer et al., 1992; Woodside and Sims, 1976). This increase in time spent could arise from several sources. First, having more persons acting jointly may require more time in order to coordinate their actions. Secondly, two or more consumers should be expected to have more needs to be met than a single consumer. As a result, more time would be needed to acquire more products or to place an order while acting jointly. Additionally, with a companion along, a consumer experience may be more enjoyable which in turn would cause a desire to prolong the experience. Along these lines, studies concerning food intake have shown a positive correlation between the number of people present at a meal and the amount individually consumed (de Castro, 2000; de Castro and Brewer, 1992). It is reasonable to expect that consuming more food will require more time at a particular restaurant. This background work frames the first hypothesis of the present study, which replicates this common finding in shopping experiences and extends it into restaurant experiences.

### 2.2. Money spent

**H2.** Consumer experience while (a) shopping and (b) patronizing a restaurant with a companion will be associated with greater money spent compared to the experience solo.

Though it may be intuitive that the presence of a companion shopper impedes individual dollars spent, research has previously demonstrated that when shopping individual consumers are more likely to make unplanned purchases (i.e., spend more) when accompanied by a companion (Bell et al., 2011). This additional spending while in the presence of a companion can be traced to the way in which others may influence risk perception, consumer confidence, and time spent. Previous findings show that having a companion shopper reduces perceptions of purchase risk (Kiecker and Hartman, 1993) and raises a consumer's confidence (Kiecker and Hartman, 1994) therefore encouraging additional spending. Similarly, studies have shown that increased total time spent at a retailer increases the amount of unplanned purchases (Granbois, 1968; Sommer et al., 1992). Finally, as food studies have found that the presence of others increases individual food intake (de Castro, 2000; de Castro and Brewer, 1992), so too is there an expectation that more food will require spending more money. In combination, these studies suggest, as a second hypothesis, that consumers will spend more time when shopping or patronizing a restaurant if they are in the presence of a companion.

### 2.3. Satisfaction

**H3.** Consumer experience while (a) shopping and (b) patronizing a restaurant with a companion will be associated with greater satisfaction compared to the experience solo.

In much of marketing research, satisfaction is a key outcome. Studies involving crowding of retail shops (e.g., Pan and Siemens, 2011) and extended service encounters (e.g., Noone and Mattila, 2009) have shown that perceived crowding has a varied influence on satisfaction. In retail settings, this relationship is described as an inverted-U, wherein consumers are more satisfied with medium crowding compared to light or heavy crowding (Pan and Siemens, 2011). In extended service encounters, perceived crowding is a negative influence particularly when consumer goals are utilitarian (Noone and Mattila, 2009). However, the present research is concerned with the influence of intentionally shopping or experiencing a restaurant with someone the consumer knows (rather than a stranger). Contrary to retail experiences with strangers (i.e., crowds), retail experiences with a member of one's social network (i.e., a companion) could be seen to offer greater social satisfaction toward. Given the recognition that consumers are often motivated to shop with another person for the companionship (Hartman and Kiecker, 1991), there is an expectation that such jointness (Blomberg, 2011; Tollefsen, 2005) of activity will have a positive influence on consumer satisfaction.

### 2.4. Attitude toward the act

**H4.** Consumer experience while (a) shopping and (b) patronizing a restaurant with a companion will be associated with enhanced attitude toward the act compared to the experience solo.

Though studies on the effects of others on individual shopping outcomes have frequently examined money and time spent (e.g., Bell et al., 2011, Granbois, 1968; Sommer et al., 1992), attitudinal outcomes have not yet figured into these investigations. Without measuring attitudinal changes, it is unclear whether increased time and money spent during joint shopping is a result of positive attitudes or simply a result of other factors, such as time for coordination. However, given that research has shown social motivation frequently influences shopping alone (Kim et al., 2005) and the decision to bring a companion shopper (Hartman and Kiecker 1991), there is reason to believe that consumer attitude toward the retail act (shopping or eating at a restaurant) will be positively impacted by the presence of a companion who may serve to socially satisfy the shopper. In terms of literature surrounding satisfaction, the presence of a companion can be seen to impact a consumers overall or cumulative satisfaction (Andreassen, 2000). In other words, consumers are expected to hold positive attitudes toward joint consumption acts as these joint acts are more socially satisfying than solo ones.

### 2.5. Re-patronage intentions

**H5.** Consumer experience while (a) shopping and (b) patronizing a restaurant with a companion will be associated with higher re-patronage intentions compared to the experience solo.

With the expectation that jointly carrying out consumer acts will enhance satisfaction and attitude toward the act (see Section 2.4 above), it is also expected that consumers will have greater intentions to patronize the retailer or restaurant again. These expectations stems from retail studies in which satisfied consumers are shown to have greater intentions of re-patronage (e.g., Baldinger and Rubinson, 1996; Grace and O'Cass, 2005) and restaurant studies showing that attitudes toward specific elements of a service encounter influence intentions of re-patronage (e.g., Yap and Kew, 2007). Though consumers' future intentions may or may not include jointly acting with a companion, the presence of a

companion in their most recent consumer act is expected to increase their intention of repeating it.

## 2.6. Gender

**H6.** The influence of a companion on individual consumer experiences while (a) shopping and (b) patronizing a restaurant on (1) time spent, (2) money spent, (3) satisfaction, (4) attitude toward the act, and (5) re-patronage intentions will be greater for female participants than male participants.

Gender differences are a common finding of retail research (e.g., Fischer and Arnold, 1990; Laroche et al., 2000). As having a companion shopper in a retail setting has been shown to be driven by social and informational motivations (Hartman and Kiecker, 1991), there is an expectation that females (i.e., the more information-seeking of the genders, Laroche et al., 2000) will be more motivated than males to have a companion when either shopping or patronizing a restaurant. These expectations stem from findings that show female shoppers comprehensively acquire in-store information compared to male shoppers (Laroche et al., 2000) and the recognition that companion shoppers can potentially provide product expertise (Hartman and Kiecker, 1991). In this regard, the information value of a companion shopper will be greater for females than males. Females also report more loneliness than men (Owens and Swensen, 2000), suggesting there may be greater social value in a companion shopper for females compared to males. In total, companion shoppers are expected to offer greater informational and social value to female shoppers than male shoppers, therefore influencing the time, money, satisfaction, attitudes, and intentions related to a joint retail experience.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Procedure

The study consisted of a two (solo/joint) by two (shopping/restaurant) factorial design in which participants were asked to recall their most recent retail experience corresponding to their treatment group. For example, those in the solo-shopping condition were asked to recall their most recent experience shopping at a retailer alone. These instructions were deliberately stated in general terms (“restaurant experience” and “shopping experience”) to allow a broad consideration of retail contexts.

Randomization was achieved using *Qualtrics* survey software, which allows the researcher to assign a survey to a particular condition based on a random function. Participants were forwarded from the *Amazon Mechanical Turk* site (see below) to this *Qualtrics* survey, which simply appeared in their browser and used familiar interface objects (e.g., radio buttons, etc.). Participants then responded to a series of items measuring their time spent, money spent, satisfaction, attitude toward the act, and re-patronage intention. An additional question asked how many days in the past this experience occurred. Finally, participants were asked their age and gender.

### 3.2. Measurements

In addition to measuring time and money spent, we utilized three experience measures: satisfaction, attitude, and re-patronage. Measurements of these constructs were based on frequently utilized, reliable scales from marketing research. Each of these scales and their items are reported in Appendix A. Satisfaction was measured using five bipolar items taken from Bansal et al. (2005). These items reflect a consumer's unidimensional general satisfaction from an experience. Attitude toward the act was measured using six bipolar

items taken from the same study of Bansal et al. (2005). This scale measures a consumer's overall evaluation of engaging in an activity. Theoretically, the construct is viewed as lying between attitude-toward-the-object and one's behavioral intention with respect to the object. Bansal et al. (2005) performed an exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis on the two scales and an additional study demonstrated their convergent validity. Re-patronage intention was measured with three bipolar items taken from Hui et al. (2004). These items reflect the degree to which a consumer expresses an intention to shop at a store or use a particular company's services again in the indefinite future.

### 3.3. Sample

Participants for the study were gathered using *Amazon Mechanical Turk* (AMT). AMT is an online micro-task marketplace in which requesters can pay for a simple task to be completed by “workers”. Numerous studies have shown that workers on AMT provide reliable data, with several researchers widely replicating studies from the social sciences (for some review and methodological description, see Mason and Suri, 2012). According to *Amazon.com*, in 2011 workers numbered over 500,000 and came from over 190 different countries. However, parameters can be set to filter which workers can complete each task. In this instance, only workers from the United States were allowed to participate. The collection produced 440 participants, which ranged in age from 18 to 69 years old with a mean age of 34 years. Of the 440 participants, 189 were males and 251 were females.

### 3.4. Results

Initial steps were taken to remove outliers after calculating Mahalanobis distance and using a  $p=.05$  cut-off. This method utilizes the observed multivariate pattern within each participant of a sample, and assists in finding participants that are far from the multivariate centroid. This step removed 46 of 440 cases from analysis. Of the remaining 394 participants, 191 responded regarding their most recent shopping experience and 203 responded regarding their most recent restaurant experience. Of these, 192 experiences were alone and 202 were with one or more persons. The average lengths of time since the shopping (2.31 days) and restaurant (1.73 days) experiences were relatively short, suggesting subject estimates of time and money spent would not be greatly affected by memory.

Analysis of the study's latent measurements revealed all measurements had high reliability. These reliability scores did not substantially differ between their measurements of either the retail or restaurant experiences. Therefore we report the overall reliabilities of .93 for satisfaction, .87 for attitude toward the act, and .94 for re-patronage intention.

In order to evaluate this study's first five hypotheses, with the expectation of multicollinearity among the outcomes, MANOVA was selected as the statistical tool of choice. This selection primarily stems from the ability of MANOVA to comparatively reduce *Type I* error when assessing multiple correlated outcomes. Furthermore, MANOVA will allow the testing of a moderating hypothesis that involves a meaningfully dichotomized variable. In this case, MANOVA will allow the evaluation of the sixth hypothesis concerning the moderating role of gender.

A first analysis examined the distinction between solo and joint participant reports, irrespective of the retail or service context. This first MANOVA examined five dependent variables (time spent, money spent, satisfaction, attitude toward the act, and re-patronage intention) with solo/joint and gender of participant as independent variables, with both shopping and restaurant observations included. The MANOVA showed significant effects at the

$p = .05$  level or greater for four of the five outcome variables (time, paid, satisfaction, and attitude) in relation to whether the activity was solo or joint (Table 1). Additionally, there were significant effects in relation to the participant gender for satisfaction, attitude, and re-patronage. Finally, there was a significant effect for the interactive jointness-gender term for amount paid, attitude, and re-patronage. Among these results, the most substantial effects related to joint activity were those upon time spent ( $\eta^2 = .082$ ) and satisfaction ( $\eta^2 = .034$ ).

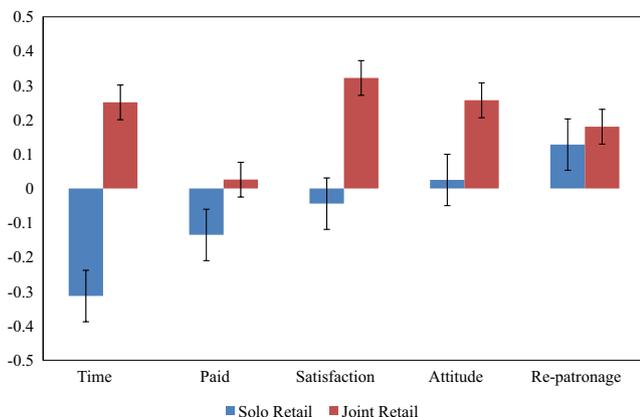
Univariate analyses shows that jointness has a positive effect on time spent, amount paid, satisfaction, and attitude toward the act (Fig. 1). However, jointness was not shown to have a significant effect on re-patronage intention. This offers support for hypotheses one through four, while failing to support the fifth hypothesis related to re-patronage.

A similar univariate analysis for gender shows an unexpected result of retail jointness having a strong impact on male amount paid (Fig. 2), attitude toward the act (Fig. 3), and re-patronage intentions (Fig. 4). These results were contrary to our expectation that female consumers would be more strongly impacted by jointness than male consumers. This overall MANOVA therefore fails to support the sixth hypothesis related to gender.

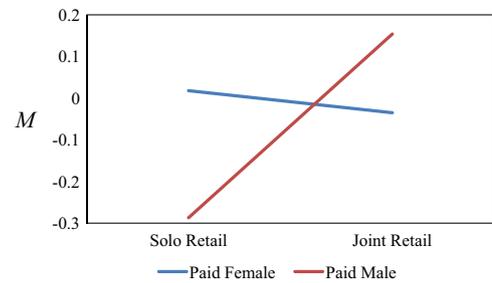
The first MANOVA considered retail experiences shopping and attending a restaurant simultaneously (Table 1). This analysis shows general support for the assertion that joint action relates positively to consumer experiences (Hypotheses 1 through 4). There was no support for the hypothesis related to re-patronage

**Table 1**  
MANOVA results from retail shopping and restaurant experiences.

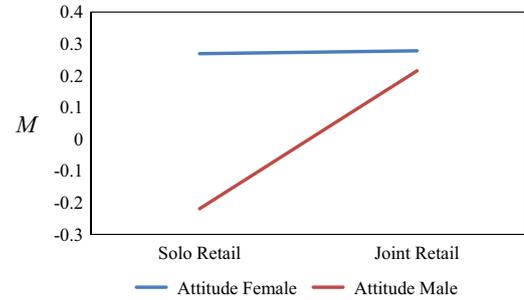
Factors	Dependent	df	F	p	$\eta^2$
Jointness (joint/solo)	Time	1	32.160	.000	.081
	Paid	1	4.675	.031	.013
	Satisfaction	1	12.741	.000	.034
	Attitude	1	5.906	.016	.016
	Re-patronage	1	.210	.647	.001
Gender	Time	1	2.335	.127	.006
	Paid	1	.411	.522	.001
	Satisfaction	1	18.183	.000	.047
	Attitude	1	9.112	.003	.024
	Re-patronage	1	9.569	.002	.026
Jointness × Gender	Time	1	.816	.367	.002
	Paid	1	7.582	.006	.020
	Satisfaction	1	.918	.339	.003
	Attitude	1	5.414	.021	.015
	Re-patronage	1	3.752	.054	.010



**Fig. 1.** Influence of jointness on retail outcomes with standard error bars.



**Fig. 2.** Gender moderation of amount paid in retail.



**Fig. 3.** Gender moderation of attitude toward the retail act.

intentions (Hypothesis 5). Contrary to our hypothesis regarding gender (Hypothesis 6), the influence of jointness was, at times, stronger for males than females (Figs. 2–4). As literature has found variance in the influence of crowding across shopping (e.g., inverted-U, Pan and Siemens, 2011) and extended service (e.g., Noone and Mattila, 2009) experiences, our analysis was repeated after splitting our data between experiences at a retail shop and those at a restaurant, which include more service components.

The first of the additional MANOVAs considered only shopping experiences (Table 2). In these instances, there is only evidence of a significant multivariate effect for time and satisfaction in relation to whether the activity was solo or joint. For gender, there was a significant multivariate effect for time, satisfaction, attitude, and re-patronage. Mean analysis revealed that when shopping, females spend more time, are more satisfied, have more positive attitudes toward the act, and greater intentions of re-patronizing the retailer. For the interaction term of jointness-gender there was a significant multivariate effect for amount paid, attitude, and re-patronage (Table 2).

The moderation role of gender in shopping experiences can be seen in Figs. 5–7. Similar to the overall MANOVA results, MANOVA results from shopping experiences show that only males responded to jointness in a positive manner. Though females were directly associated with more favorable responses to shopping, jointness unexpectedly had a negative impact on female shopping experiences.

The second of these additional MANOVAs considered only restaurant experiences (Table 3). It showed a significant multivariate effect for four of the five outcome variables (time, paid, satisfaction, and attitude) in relation to whether the activity was solo or joint. Subsequent analysis revealed each of these effects was positive for joint experiences. For the factor, gender, there was a significant multivariate effect for three out of the five outcome variables (satisfaction, attitude, and re-patronage). Means analysis revealed each of these effects was more positive for females than males. However, unlike the MANOVA concerning shopping experiences only, the interaction term jointness-gender did not have a significant effect on any outcome in restaurant experiences (Table 3). Considering gender and jointness had significant interaction in shopping experiences but not in restaurant ones, gender appears to circumstantially moderate the influence of jointness on retail outcomes.

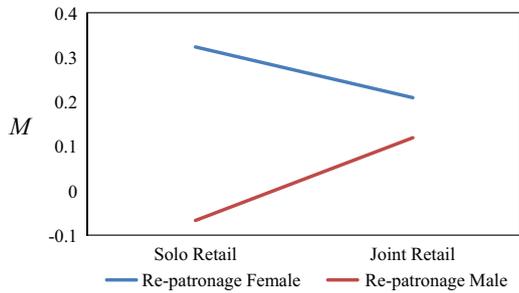


Fig. 4. Gender moderation of intentions to re-patronize the retailer.

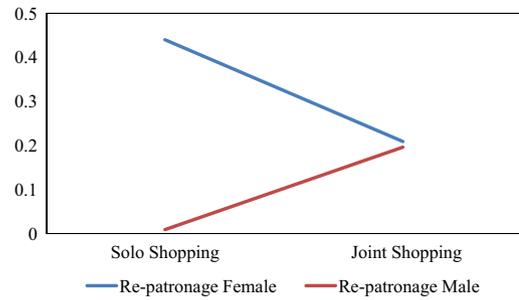


Fig. 7. Gender moderation of intentions to re-patronize the shopping retailer.

Table 2  
MANOVA results from shopping experiences only.

Factors	Dependent	df	F	p	$\eta^2$
Jointness (joint/solo)	Time	1	4.057	.046	.023
	Paid	1	1.427	.234	.008
	Satisfaction	1	3.793	.053	.022
	Attitude	1	.875	.351	.005
	Re-patronage	1	.040	.841	.000
Gender	Time	1	4.241	.041	.024
	Paid	1	.590	.443	.003
	Satisfaction	1	10.299	.002	.056
	Attitude	1	4.909	.028	.028
	Re-patronage	1	4.487	.036	.025
Jointness $\times$ Gender	Time	1	1.707	.193	.010
	Paid	1	3.977	.048	.023
	Satisfaction	1	2.434	.121	.014
	Attitude	1	4.385	.038	.025
	Re-patronage	1	3.901	.050	.022

Table 3  
MANOVA results from restaurant experiences only.

Factors	Dependent	df	F	p	$\eta^2$
Jointness (joint/solo)	Time	1	47.084	.000	.199
	Paid	1	12.995	.000	.064
	Satisfaction	1	8.336	.004	.042
	Attitude	1	6.687	.010	.034
	Re-patronage	1	.961	.328	.005
Gender	Time	1	.598	.440	.003
	Paid	1	.223	.638	.001
	Satisfaction	1	7.143	.008	.036
	Attitude	1	2.944	.088	.015
	Re-patronage	1	3.867	.051	.020
Jointness $\times$ Gender	Time	1	.021	.886	.000
	Paid	1	.324	.570	.002
	Satisfaction	1	.090	.764	.000
	Attitude	1	1.011	.316	.005
	Re-patronage	1	.259	.612	.001

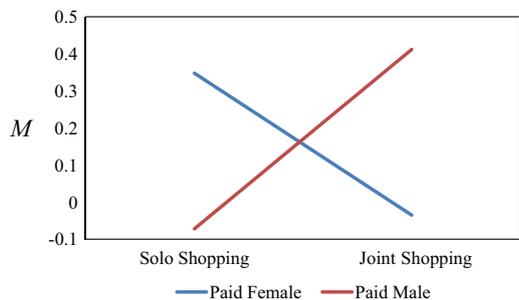


Fig. 5. Gender moderation of amount paid when shopping.

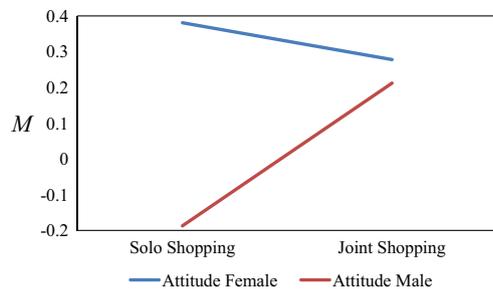


Fig. 6. Gender moderation of attitude toward the shopping act.

4. Discussion

The present study examined the role of companions during a retail shopping experience or eating at a restaurant in influencing

individual behaviors, attitudes, and intentions. This effort finds support for the overall assertion that jointly carrying out consumer retail actions has a positive influence on individual consumers. In particular, it is found that compared to solo retail experiences, joint retail experiences are associated with more time spent, money paid, purchase satisfaction, and attitude toward the act. Among these outcomes, time, money, and satisfaction serve to replicate previous findings. However, with the inclusion of an attitudinal outcome, the present work offers a deeper insight into the nature of influence that jointness has on individual consumption. Though previous studies have shown increased time (e.g., Bell et al., 2011; Granbois, 1968; Sommer et al., 1992; Woodside and Sims, 1976) and money spent (e.g., Bell et al., 2011; Kiecker and Hartman, 1993, 1994), it is uncertain whether these increases coincided with increased attitudes toward joint activity or whether these increases were strictly due to the increased complexity of coordinating retail experiences with another consumer and attempting to satisfy additional consumer needs. These results support retail managers' efforts to manage customer compatibility in order to foster customer-customer relationships. However, the present study also critically evidences that joint consumer action varies in its influence across context and genders.

It was found that the influence of a companion on individual retail outcomes varied substantially between shopping and restaurant experiences. This variance occurred in such a way that joint experiences had a greater influence on consumer outcomes in restaurant experiences than shopping experiences. Jointness increased individual time spent and satisfaction in shopping experiences. However, in restaurant experiences, there were additional positive impacts on amount paid and attitude toward the act. These differences suggest that there are some retail

settings where joint activity is of particular influence. As restaurant experiences have several service components, this finding is in line with previously evidenced differences in consumer attitudes toward extended service encounters (e.g., [Noone and Mattila, 2009](#)). Future social-consumer research should consider the other possible contexts in which joint activity is a key determinant of consumer outcomes, such as different retail contexts. For example, knowing the probability of engaging in joint-consumption in brick-and-mortar versus internet-based shopping may lead to distinctive marketing strategies, fashioned for the relative jointness of these contexts.

The present study finds interesting results pertaining to the role of gender in joint consumer activities. It was found that the influence of a companion on an individual depended upon the subject's gender when the activity in question was the shopping experience, but not the restaurant experience. This suggests that male and female responses to a joint retail experience are relevant to the retail context. Therefore, gender differences further supports the investigation of the context in which joint activity occurs.

Contrary to the authors' expectations, jointness of shopping experiences had a positive influence for male amount paid, attitude toward the act, and re-patronage intentions, but for females these effects were reversed. Though research on shopping companions has shown a positive influence of others, the present research evidences a negative influence of a companion for female shoppers. We continue to reason, as previous research (e.g., [Hartman and Kiecker 1991](#)) has done, that companion shoppers offer social and informational value to an individual shopper. Nonetheless, it may be the case that joint shopping also presents a potential disadvantage to individual shoppers as it may represent a form of compromising an individual's choice of retail location or action. In other words, compared to solo experiences, joint shopping has a greater chance of finding individual consumers in a retail location that is not their first choice acting in a way that is also not their first choice. For less involved customers with fewer retail brand preferences, the relative disadvantages of not shopping at their first choice or not acting in precisely their chosen manner may be smaller than the advantage that a companion shopper provides. For more involved customers with more retail brand preferences and product knowledge, the relative disadvantages of shopping with others may be greater than the advantages that a companion provides. To the extent to which female shoppers have been shown to have more involvement in shopping experiences than males (e.g., [Fischer and Arnold, 1990](#)), this pattern of influence could be expected. For theorists, this finding suggests future research on companion shoppers carefully consider the potential pit-falls from acting with others. In practice, the implication is that managing consumer-consumer interactions in retail shopping environments is best done through segmenting promotions along gender-defined lines. Specifically, joint shopping experiences should be encouraged for men while being discouraged for women.

Companion shoppers have not been previously considered in the context of services. However, perceived crowding in service settings has been explored (e.g., [Noone and Mattila, 2009](#)). The present evidence of an overall positive influence of a companion in the restaurant setting stands partially in contradiction to research on retail crowding that shows a circumstantially negative influence of others (e.g., [Pan and Siemens, 2011](#)). Of course, a companion shopper with whom intentions are shared is far different from strangers in a crowd with whom few intentions are shared. This suggests a key difference in the influence of others depending on whether we are acting with them jointly or merely acting while in their presence. This finding is consistent with contemporary philosophy and psychology research calling for an exploration of a wide range of intentionality in joint action

(e.g., [Tollefsen, 2005](#); [Tollefsen and Dale, 2011](#)). In this regard, our work offers support for deeper exploration of the role and boundaries of intentionality in joint consumer actions that has been previously highlighted by [Bagozzi \(2000\)](#), but has otherwise remained unquestioned. For managers, the present work ushers caution in following guidance from research on retail crowding and/or purchase pals outside of the context in which it was explored without regard for the relative difference in jointness in consumers' intentions.

## 5. Limitations

The present study reasoned that gender differences in joint shopping experiences stemmed from differences in gender involvement in shopping. However, other interpretations are possible. For example, perhaps the products that tend to be purchased by females in our cultures are ones that would induce this social moderation. This could be tested by drilling down into the specific content of the consumer experiences for men and women. It would predict that it is the purchasing context and product itself that is driving this effect, rather than gender per se. Such questions are the subject of future research.

A general concern is that we cannot yet show the locus of causal influence in the solo versus joint reports from participants. "Beneath" our effects may be a suite of subtle influences that joint contexts induce. As noted at the outset of the article, it may relate to satisfying the needs of both members of the pair, or it may relate to uncertainty reduction and confidence-inducing experiences that a shopping buddy could bring about. It may also be the case that a particular outcome, such as time spent, may act as a mediator or moderator between joint retail experience and the other outcomes, such as satisfaction. Future research may assist in teasing apart these influences. However, the results do suggest that there are such influences present during joint consumption.

An additional limitation of the present study is that joint retail experiences were recalled rather than observed. Self-reported consumer measures allowed us to easily survey a large, broad population concerning an equally broad range of consumer experiences. While this method has issues related to memory and self-report bias, the alternative of collecting observational data in an actual retail location would have substantially limited sample size and the variety of retail experiences being considered. Below, the potential concerns with memory and self-report bias are discussed

Though participants were asked to recall their most recent retail experience, it may be that this experience occurred far enough in their past as to be difficult to recall specifics. In particular, studies have suggested that consumer memory for prices-paid is very poor (e.g., [Dickson and Sawyer, 1990](#)). However, these studies have viewed accuracy in terms of absolute accuracy. In their extensive review of price-memory research, [Monroe and Lee \(1999\)](#) found that while a large portion of consumers cannot recall an exact price-paid, the average error of price-paid recall was relatively small and varied from 6% to 19.45% across studies. In terms of the present study, it may be the case that in terms of exactness, participants have poor ability recall their behaviors, but it is likely that their recall is not far off. Moreover, the authors feel that this effect is mitigated primarily by the fact the mean time since retail experience for both shopping and restaurant times were each less than three days.

As with all survey research utilizing self-report, there is concern that participants may have perceived social desirability in certain responses. In terms of [Podsakoff et al. \(2003\)](#) framework of common method bias in behavior research, this occurs in the final stage of a participant's response formulation—response reporting.

In this stage, participants edit their responses for consistency, acceptability, or other criteria. For example, in the present study it may have been that participants perceived socially desirability in shopping more frequently or spending large amounts of money when shopping and these beliefs caused them to exaggerate the frequency of shopping and amount spent. However, any exaggeration in participant responses would be present in both solo and joint experiences. Therefore, while the accuracy of any particular measure may have suffered from self-report bias, the differences evidenced between solo and joint activities should remain unaffected.

## 6. Conclusion

Retail settings are commonly filled with groups of two or more consumers intentionally acting together. Even so, research on consumer attitudes, behaviors, and intentions often ignores this reality, creating a need for exploring consumer–consumer relationships. The present study finds evidence that jointness has a positive influence on consumers' restaurant experiences regardless of gender. The influence of jointness on consumers' shopping experiences, however, depended substantially upon gender and was, at times, negative. For males, joint shopping experiences were of additional value over solo ones. For females, the opposite was demonstrated. These findings are significant to managers as they offer additional layers of managing joint experiences in terms of context and gender. Overall, managers are recommended to promote joint restaurant experiences for all customers, while only encouraging joint shopping experiences for males.

The attitudinal results of the present study offer theorists a clearer interpretation of previous results, namely increases in time (e.g., Granbois, 1968; Sommer et al., 1992; Woodside and Sims, 1976) and money spent (e.g., Bell et al., 2011; Kiecker and Hartman, 1993, 1994) when shopping with others. The current results see these findings as corresponding to an individual's attitude toward the joint act. Though studies consistently find a positive influence of companions on individual consumer outcomes (e.g., Bell et al., 2011), the present results challenge both the notion that such influence is consistent and the notion that such influence is always positive. For consumer models that take a unidimensional stance on joint consumption, these data pose significant challenges. Though acting with others clearly has potential benefits, the present study finds acting with others has a dimension of burden as well. This burden, at times, was seen to outweigh the positive dimension(s) of jointness (e.g., for females in the shopping context). In these regards, the present study calls for a new approach to joint consumer action research that simultaneously probes the benefit and burden of retail companions while also considering the retail context and individual characteristics.

## Appendix A

### *Satisfaction (Bansal et al., 2005)*

Please indicate how satisfied *you* were with your restaurant (shopping) experience by selecting the response that best gives your answer. (7-point bipolar scales).

Displeased me – Pleased me  
 Disgusted with – Contented with  
 Very dissatisfied with – Very satisfied with  
 Did poor for me – Did good for me  
 Unhappy with – Happy with

### *Attitude toward the act (Bansal et al., 2005)*

Using the items below, please indicate *your* attitude toward this restaurant (shopping) experience.

Bad – Good  
 Foolish – Wise  
 Harmful – Beneficial  
 Unpleasant – Pleasant  
 Useless – Useful  
 Undesirable – Desirable

### *Intention of Re-patronage (Hui et al., 2004)*

Using the items below, please indicate the likelihood that *you* would eat at this restaurant again (shop at this retailer again)? (7-point bipolar scales)

Unlikely – Likely  
 Definitely no – Definitely yes  
 Not inclined to – Inclined to

### *Time spent*

How long, in minutes, did *you* spend at the restaurant (while shopping)?

### *Money spent*

How much money, in dollars, did *you* spend at the restaurant (while shopping)?

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