AN INVESTIGATION OF RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING ACTIVITIES ON MALL WEB PAGES:

A Study of Synergy between Shopping in Malls and Shopping on the Internet

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Overview

The Web provides an excellent means to develop profitable relationships with mail customers. Many regional malls have fully interactive Web sites to take advantage of the Web's potential while others lack a Web presence. The findings reported here reveal current trends in promoting three related areas of mall

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marketing on the Web: Mall Basic Information, Mall Facilities and Mall Event Promotion. These areas are organized within a five-level relationship marketing model based on Web site interactivity. Additional Web site features are also presented. Empirical results gathered from 250 regional malls indicate a wide range of Web site features that encourage mall patronage. The Web study that examined shopping and buying preferences at the mall and on the Web substantiated current thought that most people are using the Web as an information source as opposed to a place to make purchases. However, a trend may be developing for certain product categories that do not require tactile examination (e.g., consumer electronics) to be both sought and then purchased on the Web for certain demographic groups (males 25 to 34 years old and females 25 to 49 years old).

■ Introduction

Although the shopping center industry has certainly been faced with numerous challenges within the past two decades, the challenges presented by the growth of the Web and of e-tailing have received particular concern and have been the subject of some very spirited debates among retail colleagues. When retailing first began to appear on the Web a few short years ago, the forecasts of the effect that Web retailing would have on bricks-and-mortar retailing varied widely. Several forecasts, for instance, spoke of the imminent demise of bricks-and-mortar retailing by the year 2000—a frightening prospect indeed for traditional retailers and the owners and managers of shopping centers (Feinberg, 1997). Others labeled the Web as a fad—something that would quickly go the way of hula hoops and clear colas.

Many of the initial forecasts of the effect that the Web would have on retailing, however, have been far from accurate. Clearly, both the Web and bricks-and-mortar retailers still exist with neither appearing to vanish any time soon. During the 1999 Christmas season, for instance, although sales on the Web grew exponentially, mall sales grew as well—in fact, mall sales grew by a healthy 7.7% (Martinez, 2000). Similarly, preliminary sales data for the 2000 Christmas season indicate continuing exponential growth of retail sales on the Web along with continuing mall sales growth, but with a significantly lower rate of growth than the previous year (Weiss, 2000a). Overall, retail sales on the Web still accounted only for 0.78% of total retail sales during the third quarter of 2000 and only 13%

of the sales at Wal-Mart alone during that time period (Weiss, 2000b). Unfortunately for mall retailers, the relatively low percentage of retail sales occurring over the Web does not mean that retailing on the Web does not pose a threat to bricks-and-mortar retailing. This reality is correctly depicted in many article titles, such as "Developers Respond to the E-commerce Challenge" (Wilson, 2000) and "Mall Developers Seek Continuing Role in On-Line Retail Revolution" (Seideman, 1999).

Suburban regional shopping malls have experienced great success in the past, but with the growth of alternative retailing formats, the key is customer retention. Indeed, maintaining and/or building relationships—the type of ongoing relationship that could be classified as a "marriage of buyer and seller" (Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987)—with customers using the newer communication technologies, such as the Web, may be vital to the continual success of malls. Although that development of an enduring relationship between retailer and consumer is something that several e-tailers have failed to engage effectively in the past, many e-tailers are focusing increasing attention on overcoming these deficiencies. Must suburban regional shopping malls and the Web always be in opposition to one another or is a measure of synergy available? Specifically, can the Web be used by suburban regional shopping malls to aid them in building relationships with their customers and drive their customers to their bricks-and-mortar tenants? Web sites may offer a means by which suburban regional shopping malls can maintain or build a relationship with their customers. Indeed, mall owners may be able to make Web sites act as doorways to their bricks-and-mortar shopping malls. That is, the Web may become one additional means to draw customers into suburban regional shopping malls. The objective of this study is to identify the level of relationship-building activities that are present on existing mall Web sites, to examine consumer expectations, desires and needs regarding the information included on Web sites of suburban shopping malls and to measure preferences for shopping and buying different product categories at the mall and on the Web.

Web Versus Bricks-and-Mortar

The popularity of the Web, as well as its ease, anonymity and the ability to visit sites around the globe, has attracted significant consumer attention to e-tailing. Consumers are now able to view products that existed only in their imaginations before their access to the Web. Web retailers also offer consumers a number of advantages over conventional bricks-and-mortar retailers (Chan and Rahner, 1999; Heares, 2000; Hendershott et al, 2000). There are, for instance, several sources of possible cost savings. First, the prices of the products themselves are at times lower on the Web than they are at bricks-and-mortar stores. The increased ease by which prices can be compared between Web retailers (leading to greater levels of competition), coupled with the lower operating costs enjoyed by Web retailers (because of the lack of a need to invest in the costs of operating bricks-and-mortar stores or, at least, in only a limited number of bricks-and-mortar stores) act to push prices down. The greatest cost savings to customers offered by Web retailers, however, is not lower prices, but the opportunity to avoid some of the costs associated with shopping activity. For instance, the costs of fuel and wear and tear on the family automobile can add up quickly. Moreover, shopping on the Web has the potential to be fast and convenient. There is no need to try to find a parking space and no traffic jams in which to become stuck. Likewise, the Web is open 24 hours a day with no need to get dressed or prepare oneself for the shopping trip. Shopping can be done while other family members are fast asleep, so shopping can be done independently no matter what a household's composition may be. It appears increasingly that browsing and shopping via the Web are likely to be ongoing activities for many consumers.

Web retailing, however, is not a panacea for the trials associated with bricks-and-mortar retailers. The pitfalls of Web retailers from the consumers' point-of-view include a lack of real-time information from many Web retailers (such as whether the item is in stock or whether it would be back-ordered), perceived security problems—the need to give a credit card number (Blank, 2000), problems with the electronic checkout (Verton, 2000), delivery hassles and cost (Moreno and McCormack, 1998), Web site malfunction (Blank, 2000) and the difficulty in achieving instant gratification (Welanetz, 1999). Furthermore, customers are less able to "experience" products when they are presented on a Web site—they are unable to touch, feel or try a product (Martinez, 2000).

Opinions and research regarding the effect that the Web will have on the behavior of today's consumer vary significantly. A recent Pricewater-house-Coopers survey (2000) discovered that the number of Web users who bought clothing online doubled, from eight percent to 16% between September of 1999 and May of 2000. However, this same study showed that bricks-and-mortar retailers are still preferred to the online stores. Less than 30% of online clothing buyers actually preferred buying online to offline. A study in the Spring of 1997 by CommerceNet and the Nielsen Media Research Group produced important demographic information regarding this same topic. "Shopping behavior is not the same as buying behavior. While the likelihood of completing online purchases increases with age among males, it never substantially departs from the average among females" (CommerceNet/Nielsen Web Demographic Survey, 1997). This study concluded that the number of people who shop and buy products on the Web is growing. However, it also reports that the majority of Web users are still not likely to make online purchases in the near future. In a more recent survey conducted by InsightExpress, however, 86% of 300 adults polled indicated that they preferred shopping on the Web over shopping at the mall (Shelton, 2000).

Although some disagreement remains over the actual volume of retail sales taking place over the Web, it presently represents a minuscule percentage of overall retail sales. The Forrester aggregate data, for instance, estimate that retail sales over the Web reached $20 billion in 1999 and are expected to grow 55% annually during the next five years (Allen, 2000). Total retail sales today, however, exceed two-and-a-half trillion dollars annually. Furthermore, a significant percentage of Web sales are sales that have been drawn from catalog sales as opposed to being drawn from sales previously occurring at bricks-and-mortar retailers (Hendershott et al, 2000).

It appears, therefore, that Web retail sales are not going to be the death knell for bricks-and-mortar retailers, but that both will likely continue to co-exist. John Bucksbaum, executive vice president of Chicago-based General Growth Properties, Inc. and Hugh F. Kelly, CRE with Landauer Associates in New York, for instance, do not foresee an entire American shopping culture going by the wayside due to the Web. "Teenagers will still meet on weekends at the mall, last-minute shoppers will need to rush and buy birthday, anniversary and Mother's Day presents. Families will still go and stroll through the shops and let their children eat ice cream and play video games" (Roe, 1999).

Some suggest that the relationship between Web retailing and bricks-and-mortar retailing may not necessarily be antagonistic, but instead can be symbiotic (e.g., Gentry, 2000). Heinlein (1997) points out that online retailers offer a different service than the walk-in competitors. "On-line catalogs are no real substitute for a face-to-face chat with a good salesman (*sic*), but neither can a traditional retailer offer much to the pajama-clad or desk-bound buyer." Perhaps the ideas that Heinlein presents regarding the differences in services between online and offline retailing are worth our thought and consideration. As both shopping and buying continue to take place via the Web, it would seem that plenty of room exists for both the Web and bricks-and-mortar. Justin Bachman's article in the Associated Press quotes Jerry Welch, chairman and chief executive of California-based The Right Start, Inc., as saying, "The Internet's going to enhance activities at the malls. It's not going to take away . . . You have an ability to have a showroom in your customers' homes 24 hours a day from which they can shop . . . The notion that it's a zero-sum game and that the Internet is going to close all the malls—it's really ill-founded" (Bachman, 1999).

One study suggests that the Web is not about buying, but about shopping—a place where consumers gather information, but do not necessarily buy (Katz, 2000). During the 1998 Christmas season, for instance, nearly 80% of Web shoppers were not Web buyers—the Web proved useful for shopping, but most chose to buy via a different channel, typically through bricks-and-mortar retailers (Welanetz, 1999). Based on Web research groups, Bodamer (2000) reports a significantly lower consumer conversion rate among Web retailers with only about two percent of visits to online retailers resulting in a sale. Many consumers appear to do at least some of their shopping online and then visit a bricks-and-mortar retailer to make their actual purchases. P. Sapienza, an Internet specialist in charge of sportswear marketing at Patagonia, stated, "We have a strong suspicion that people use our catalog as a shopping guide for our stores. Indications are that the Internet is the same" (Moukheiber, 1997). Buying from Web retailers is an experience that is fundamentally different from buying from bricks-and-mortar retailers. Most consumers are tactile-oriented—they need to "see, hear, smell, taste and touch their purchases" in certain product categories such as apparel, accessories, shoes and home furnishings (Martinez, 2000). These experiences are not generally available from Web retailers. Furthermore, bricks-and-mortar retailers have the capability to offer shoppers a social shopping experience with a degree of entertainment—additional experiences which their online competitors cannot.

One undisputable fact agreed upon by all retailers is that the consumers of today view their most precious commodity as "time." Research done by Miller (1999) indicates that in-store comparison shopping may be less popular than in past years. Talmadge (1998) believes that today's buyers will plan their shopping trips much more carefully than in the past. They will know where they are going, what is available when they get there and what price they will be paying for a commodity. Shopping on the Web allows them this luxury. Consumers can make plans for their physical shopping trip through preliminary shopping on the Web, with the actual buying taking place at bricks-and-mortar locations. Additionally, recent studies note that shopping is a major goal of tourists. Directories of shopping opportunities are increasingly being provided for many major city and tourist sites on the Web. Again, the online shopping has the potential to attract the buyer to the bricks-and-mortar locations (Talmadge, 1998).

Although debate continues over the magnitude of the effect that the Web will have on shopping patterns of consumers as well as the future size of the online retail market, many owners of suburban regional shopping malls and many retailers are moving aggressively to develop plans for integrating the Web into their marketing plans.

The notion that the future of retailing is the link between e-commerce and bricks-and-mortar is replacing the original—and radical—thought that e-commerce would replace shopping centers altogether. Developers are testing and tweaking their concepts to ensure that this link is a strong one and that both methods of commerce support each other. What is most exciting about how the shopping center industry is responding to e-commerce is the creativity and diversity in programs and products that are being offered. Developers aren't just slapping up Web sites to provide portals to a selection of retailers (Wilson, 2000).

The challenge for the mall owner/manager may not be whether or not to include mall Web sites as part of their marketing plan, but rather how to involve the use of the Web in establishing lasting consumer relationships. Web capabilities which efficiently serve the consumer by providing accessible quality customer service, by communicating necessary relationship-building information to that consumer via the Web and by integrating the Web as a complementary shopping channel to the bricks-and-mortar stores all serve as both an opportunity and a serious challenge to mail owners/managers.

■ The Study

The study is comprised of two parts. Part I examines the expectations, desires and informational needs of consumers as they relate to Web sites of suburban regional shopping malls while Part II explores the shopping and buying preferences of consumers at the mall and on the Web for different product categories.

■ Part I: Relationship Marketing in Regional Malls via the Web

The primary objective of this part of the study is to explore a new dimension of regional mall marketing relationships with customers. Specifically, it describes customer retention marketing strategies utilized by regional malls as evidenced by the content of their Web home pages. This research is exploratory in nature and provides a theoretical framework for examining and classifying mall Web sites.

Relationship Marketing Strategies

Marketing efforts directed at mall customers are based on the fundamental marketing concept: "the purpose of a business is to create and keep a customer" (Levitt, 1986). Mall survival may depend on customer loyalty focused on developing the type of ongoing relationship that could be classified as a "marriage of buyer and seller" (Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987). Seeking and providing opportunities for direct feedback from customers is an important component of this strategy (Normann, 1991). Once a customer has visited a mall, this relationship orientation encourages mall operators to encourage repeat visits far into the future.

Developing new and better opportunities to communicate, regional mall Web sites are beginning to take advantage of this new medium, which allows consumers an opportunity to be in dialogue with the seller—the first step in the dyadic exchange. This study seeks to explore the attraction and retention strategies of regional malls evidenced by the level of relationship and opportunities for two-way communication with consumers on their Web sites.

Methodology

Kotler and Armstrong (1996) posit five levels of relationship with customers who have purchased a company's product based on post-transaction activity by the producer. At the *Basic* level, there is no follow-up to the sale. The customer is encouraged to call with questions or problems at the *Reactive* level, but the customer must initiate contact. One post-transaction contact initiated by the seller defines the *Accountable* level. A *Proactive* level relationship includes periodic contact with the customer, while a *Partnership* level relationship implies continual contact.

These levels have been modified to define relationship strategies reflected on the home pages of regional malls on the Web as evidenced by specific content divided into three areas: Mall Basic Information, Mall Facilities and Mall Event Promotion. The Relationship Marketing Model for Regional Malls is shown in Table 1. Preliminary visits to selected mall Web sites provided the array of possible interactive attributes that define each level of the model.

Mall Basic Information

There are always new prospective customers wishing to shop at regional malls. Assisting newcomers to the area, tourists, weekend guests, etc., in locating and arriving at a mall is an obvious task that must be undertaken. Without a Web site, prospects have traditionally used telephone directories or printed materials to find local malls. The mall or community Web site is a convenient and cost-efficient way to direct prospects to shopping venues.

TABLE 1. RELATIONSHIP MARKETING MODEL FOR REGIONAL MALL OPERATIONS

Level	Mall Basic Information	Mall Facilities	Mall Event Promotion
Basic	Mall map & driving directions	Phone number: general	Calendar with event names
Reactive	Store directory with categories	Written description	Calendar with event description
Accountable	Store directory with brands	Written description with images	Calendar with event description and images
Proactive	Store directory with hyperlinks	Phone number for reservations	Interactive event promotions: prizes/games or coupons
Partnership	Store directory with hyperlinks and promotions	E-mail for reservations	Member registry: online registration

Additional pre-shopping information is important as well. Consumers often desire store, brand and promotion information before visiting a regional mall. Before they make a travel commitment, a Web site can provide them with detailed mall information without the need to place one or more phone calls. Mall representatives may not have that type of information available and must refer potential shoppers to individual stores. All this effort can be frustrating and time-consuming to a prospective mall visitor.

For this sector, the lowest relationship level, the *Basic* level, is defined as a home page that provides driving directions and/or a static map. A store directory organized by merchandise category was set at the *Reactive* level. The *Accountable* level of basic mall information includes a store directory featuring merchandise brands. A store directory with hyperlinks to stores is at the *Proactive* level. Finally, providing consumers with a store directory with hyperlinks and promotions is at the *Partnership* level.

Mall Facilities

Many regional malls provide consumers with special services and facilities. Examples are event-hosting space for service clubs and charities, meeting rooms available for rent, mall walkers' clubs and birthday party hosting. How do mall managers communicate the availability of these extra services? One way is to place facilities information on the mall Web site.

The *Basic* level, for this sector, was defined as a home page that provides a general telephone number to call for information about mall facilities but with no specific mention of available facilities. A written description of mall facilities was set at the *Reactive* level. The *Accountable* level provided a written description with images. A facilities reservation telephone number indicated a *Proactive* level of relationship. The highest level, the *Partnership* level, provided consumers with an e-mail link for facilities' reservations.

Mall Event Promotion

Promoting mall events can be expensive and time-consuming using traditional media. The mall Web site offers an easy-to-use vehicle for such promotions. Informing and reminding mall visitors with promotional signage and/or displays is less costly than commercial media but may fail to reach non-visitors and others who don't attend to advertising messages. The regional mall Web site is an excellent means to interact with consumers wanting to participate in mall events.

The *Basic* level, for this sector, was defined as an event calendar containing only event names noted. A calendar with event names and written descriptions was set at the *Reactive* level. The *Accountable* level provided written event descriptions and images. Interactive event promotions featuring prizes, games or coupons were at the *Proactive* level. The highest level, *Partnership,* contained a mall membership registry with online registration availability. With this registry database, members can receive e-mail for future events and promotions. This level represents an excellent mechanism for developing long-term customer relationships.

Data Collection Methods

Regional mall Web site visits were conducted during January and February 2001. This period should have reflected fully-developed Web sites because of the proximity to the holiday season. However, many malls have chosen not to have a Web presence, as shown in the data analysis to follow. The addresses for regional mall Web sites were located using the June 2000 database from the *Directory of Major Malls,* a commercial product.

The five-level theoretical model described above was used to classify Web sites. Specific content was related to each level of the model along three dimensions (Mall Basic Information, Mall Facilities, Mall Event Promotion). If content indicated more than one relationship level within a particular dimension, the highest level of relationship was used.

Sampling Frame

All regional malls contained in the directory were analyzed. As expected, however, not all regional malls had consumer Web sites. As indicated in a subsequent section, a number of regional malls had commercial rather than consumer Web sites. The commercial sites featured information for stores and property developers. Also, many regional malls listed in the database had no Web site at all. There may be Web sites for some malls that were not listed in the June 2000 edition of the *Directory of Major Malls* database. And, Web sites may have been initiated after June 2000. No other sources were used to discover Web sites not found in the database. Regional malls in the database are located in the United States and Canada; no other countries were included.

The *Directory of Major Malls'* database of June 2000 contains 3,535 properties. The largest subgroup is Community Shopping Centers (1,864) followed by Regional Malls (947) and Super Regional Malls (457). The remaining 150 properties are classified as Entertainment Centers, Power Centers, Value Retail Centers and others. For the present investigation, only two subgroups were analyzed: Regional Malls and Super Regional Malls. Regional Malls are those with between 500,000 and 999,999 square feet while Super Regional Malls contain 1,000,000 or more square feet. For the purposes of this study, the term "regional malls" includes both Regional and Super Regional malls.

Of the 1,404 properties examined, 385 or 27.4% had Web sites listed in the database. Of the total 385 Web sites listed, 289 or 75.1% had consumer Web sites with the remainder being business Web sites. Of the 289 consumer Web sites, 250 were accessible during the time-frame of the study. The difference, or 39 consumer Web sites, were not sampled because they were either totally or partially nonfunctional. Of the 250 Web sites, 114 or 45.6% of the total examined are Super Regional Malls while the remaining 136 or 54.4% are Regional Malls. These 250 consumer, not business, Web sites represent the total sample of regional malls analyzed here.

Findings

Table 2 summarizes the major findings of this research. Percentages are based on the total usable sample of 250 regional malls. For the reader's convenience, cells contain both the model descriptors and statistical results. Means, standard deviations and variances are also shown.

Mall Basic Information

As indicated in Table 2, nearly half (47.6%) of the regional mall Web sites examined scored at the highest or *Partnership* level in customer interactivity. These sites contained store directories with hyperlinks to stores and featured promotions. This is encouraging because it alerts shoppers to "deals" and assists them in finding store-specific information even if the hyperlink is to a national rather than local store Web site.

TABLE 2. RELATIONSHIP MARKETING MODEL RESULTS BY CONTENT AREA

	Mall Basic Information		Mall Facilities		Mall Event Promotion	
Level	**None**	**0.0%**	**None**	**2.4%**	**None**	**3.6%**
Basic 1	Mall map & driving directions	2.0%	Phone number: general	6.4%	Calendar with event names	17.6%
Reactive 2	Store directory with categories	38.8%	Written description	19.6%	Calendar with event description	13.2%
Accountable 3	Store directory with brands	1.6%	Written description with images	53.6%	Calendar with event description and images	3.6%
Proactive 4	Store directory with hyperlinks	10.0%	Phone number for reservations	0.4%	Interactive event promotions prizes/games or coupons	13.2%
Partnership 5	Store directory with hyperlinks & promotions	47.6%	E-mail for reservations	17.6%	Member registry: online registration	48.8%
Means		3.62		2.96		3.52
Standard deviations		1.45		1.17		1.73
Variances		2.09		1.38		2.99

N = 250

The next most frequently observed level was *Reactive* at 38.8%. This level contains a store directory organized by product/service category. The directory is similar to mall signage found at most property entrances. Both are not interactive and, therefore, not particularly useful in developing customer relationships.

Just a few regional malls (1.6%) had brands listed with a store directory which represents the *Accountable* level. The *Proactive* level had 10.0% and the *Basic* level had 2.0%. None of the regional malls studied lacked Mall Basic Information on their Web sites. Overall, the mean for Mall Basic Information was 3.62 which falls between the *Accountable* and *Proactive* levels of the relationship model. This is also the highest mean of all three issues examined in this study. The regional malls investigated appear to be offering prospects and customers relatively high amounts of information and interactivity with tenants. However, merely duplicating mall signage is probably not the optimal way to engage customers on a Web site.

Mall Facilities

The mean value for Mall Facilities was the lowest observed at 2.96. This approximates the *Accountable* level overall. One explanation for this is that some regional malls may place more or less emphasis on their facilities because of basic mall management strategy. If staging community events proves successful to operators and tenants, then such events will most likely be promoted. As shown in Table 2, 2.4% of regional malls' Web Sites contained no information about mall facilities. These properties, however, may not have or wish to promote mall facilities.

The high level recorded (53.6%) is at the *Accountable* level that features a written description of mall facilities with accompanying images. Next highest was the *Reactive* level at 19.6%. The *Partnership* level accounted for 17.6% of the regional malls studied. This level gives potential customers the option of e-mailing the mall for facility reservations. This is a bit surprising because it outscored *Basic* and *Proactive* levels which feature only telephone numbers. E-mail is perceived as more convenient because, unlike telephone inquiries, no real-time interactivity is required for the sender or receiver.

Mall Event Promotion

Permission or opt-in e-mail has become one of the cornerstones of relationship cybermarketing. Spam or unsolicited e-mail is probably as irritating as full mall parking lots. This study shows, however, that 48.8% of the Web sites visited featured a member registry with online registration. This suggests that members who register opt-in to receive mall promotional announcements. Once fully implemented, this is, no doubt, the most cost-efficient and least wasteful method to promote a suburban regional mall.

A small but conceptually significant number of regional malls, 3.6%, had no Mall Event Promotion information on their Web sites. It is possible, but unlikely, that the regional malls studied here do not stage mall events. Why a mall would choose not to promote such events on its Web site is unknown.

The *Basic* level indicates that 17.6% use a calendar with event names only. At the *Reactive* level, 13.2% had calendars with written event descriptions. Just 3.6% of the regional malls studied had event calendars with descriptions and images. The *Proactive* level, which contains interactive games, prizes or coupons, accounted for 13.2% of mall Web sites studied. In total, Mall Event Promotion had a mean of 3.52 or midway between the *Accountable* and *Proactive* levels of the relationship model. This is slightly lower than the 3.62 mean observed with Mall Basic Information.

Total Relationship Score

The scores for the three content areas were added to form a Total Relationship score. As shown in Table 3, the mean for this composite variable was 10.04 with a standard deviation of 3.02 and a variance of 9.09. Twenty-six regional malls received the highest scores possible and represent 10.4% of the sample. The largest proportion of regional malls, 21.2%, scored a nine which is approximately one point below the mean.

TABLE 3. RELATIONSHIP MARKETING MODEL RESULTS BY TOTAL RELATIONSHIP SCORE

Total Relationship Score	Number of Web Sites	Percent
1	2	0.8%
2	0	0.0%
3	4	1.6%
4	1	0.4%
5	14	5.6%
6	9	3.6%
7	14	5.6%
8	22	8.8%
9	53	21.2%
10	28	11.2%
11	16	6.4%
12	24	9.6%
13	35	14.0%
14	2	0.8%
15	26	10.4%
Totals	250	100.0%
Mean score	10.04	
Standard deviation	3.02	
Variance	9.09	

As a group, the suburban regional mall Web sites analyzed displayed a commendable attempt to establish and maintain relationships with prospects and customers. There are, however, many regional mall Web sites that merely mimic printed information available through non-Web methods of distribution. Results indicate a positive skew toward more relationship building via the Web.

Supplementary Data Analyses

In addition to the relationship marketing model contents and findings, several other Web site features were analyzed. Some of these variables are convenience items while others may directly influence relationship establishment and enhancement These results are summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4. SUPPLEMENTARY WEB SITE FEATURES SUMMARY

Supplementary Web Site Features	Percent
Community hyperlink	31.5%
Privacy statement	31.6%
Site map	92.8%
General search engine	56.0%
Mall loyalty program	50.8%
Personal shopper service	6.0%
Gift search engine	14.0%
Mall gift certificates	87.6%
Complete mall gift certificate online	50.8%
Mall gift registry	2.4%
Mall gift reminder service	11.2%

Discussion and Conclusion

Customer attraction and retention are important issues for regional malls and are reflected in the results of this study. There are a number of regional malls that have made their Web sites "friendly" and interactive by achieving the *Proactive* or *Partnership* relationship levels.

In sum, the lowest three levels of the relationship marketing model simply provide alternate access to information which has been traditionally found in brochures or similar printed material distributed at various points inside regional malls. The highest two levels, *Proactive* and *Partnership,* represent true interactivity and thus provide opportunities to bond with customers. If these two levels are collapsed into one category, the results give added insight into how many suburban regional mall Web sites are using interactivity to develop relationships.

For Mall Basic Information, 57.6% fall into the top two levels. For Mall Event Promotion, we have 62.0% for these combined levels. A significantly lower proportion, 18.0%, is noted for Mall Facilities. Many more regional malls could improve their Web site's interactivity, and thus relationship potential, for their prospects and customers.

■ Part II: Shopping and Buying Preferences at Mall and on Web by Respondents' Age and Gender

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted on the questionnaire that was to pretest the questionnaire. A convenience sample of 323 individuals who had access to the Web and had been to a mall in the last six months were asked a series of questions about their shopping and purchase patterns for different product categories over the last six months. An attempt was made to have an equal representation of males and females. The resulting sample consisted of 162 males and 161 females. In the sample, 14.2% were less than 18 years old; 25.4% were between 18 and 24 years old; 20.7% were between 25 and 34 years old; 19.5% were between 35 and 49 years old, and 20.1% were between 50 and 64 years old. No one over the age of 65 who was approached had Web access.

The questionnaire was administered by personal interview. The respondents were asked if they had purchased 34 product categories in the last six months. The merchandise categories chosen to be included in the questionnaire were all available at one, the other, or both of the two malls in this region. If they responded yes, then they were asked to rate their shopping and buying preferences for that product category on a seven-point scale with seven being "prefer a lot" and one being "not at all prefer." The data were analyzed using ANOVA tests and pair-wise t-tests. Certain product categories did have significant differences in the ratings based on age and gender of the respondents, and there were significant differences in some product categories based on shopping versus buying preferences on the Web and at the mall. However, the most startling result of the pilot study was the low ratings given to both shopping and buying on the Web regardless of the product category.

The pilot study also revealed several problems that needed to be addressed. First of all, the pilot study contained too many product categories. An attempt was made to include all product categories available at a typical mall. The respondents "learned" not to say that they had bought an item in the last six months because they then faced a battery of questions. Another problem that surfaced was the question that asked if the product was a gift or not. They interpreted gift as truly a present. The information wanted was, however, if the item was bought for themselves or for someone else. The questionnaire was reworded to explain the difference. Another misunderstanding was the difference between shopping and buying. The respondents needed a detailed explanation so that they would know what the different rating scales were measuring.

Web Study

Methodology

With the cooperation of the Cafaro Company, a link to the Web questionnaire was placed on 16 of its mall Web sites for three weeks. The malls were located in Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin and West Virginia. Respondents were enticed to fill out the questionnaire with the chance to win a $500 mall gift certificate. An e-mail was sent out by the Cafaro Company to customers in their database telling them about the questionnaire and the chance to win $500. The resulting sample of usable questionnaires was 617. Table 5 presents the mall from which the respondents linked to the questionnaire. The sample consisted of respondents from several different geographic areas and represented people who were actually on the Web as opposed to self-reporting that they had Web access. The Web questionnaire initially assured the respondents that their answers would remain confidential. They were then asked four open-ended questions about how they found the mall Web site, why they visited the mall Web site, if they found what they wanted at the site, and if they planned to return to the site in the future. The respondents were then asked if they had purchased from 18 different product categories in the last six months. If they responded yes, they were asked if the purchase was for themselves and then asked to rate their preferences for shopping and for buying each of the product categories at the mall or on the Web on a seven-point scale with seven being a very strong preference and one being a very weak preference. After the rating scales, respondents were asked about their spending patterns at the mall and on the Web. Finally, demographic information was gathered.

The resulting sample consisted of 101 males and 511 females. Five respondents chose not to indicate their gender. Most of the respondents were Caucasian (96.1%) while 1.8% were African American; 1.1% were Asian/Pacific Islander; 0.6% were Hispanic and 0.3% were Native Americans. Five percent had attended high school; 27.4% were high school graduates; 30.3% attended college; 26.7% were college graduates, and 8.3% had pursued postgraduate education. Surprisingly, all of the respondents answered the household income question, with 6.5% indicating household incomes less than $10,000, 21.1% with household incomes between $10,000 and $29,999, 32.4% with household incomes between $30,000 and $49,999, 28.8% with household incomes between $50,000

TABLE 5. SOURCE OF SAMPLE BY MALL

Mall	Sample Size	Percent of Responses
America Mall	8	1.3
Ashtabula Mall	48	7.8
Eastwood Mall	115	18.6
Frenchtown Square Mall	25	4.1
Governor's Square Mall	21	3.4
Huntington Mall	59	9.6
Kennedy Mall	69	11.2
Kentucky Oaks Mall	22	3.6
Meadowbrook Mall	45	7.3
Mill Creek Mall	76	12.3
North Park Mall	19	3.1
Ohio Valley Mall	35	5.7
Sandusky Mall	18	2.9
South Hill Mall	18	2.9
Southland Mall	10	1.6
Spotsylvania Mall	29	4.7
Total	617	100.0

and $79,999, 6% with household incomes between $80,000 and $99,999, and 5.2% with household incomes above $100,000. For age, 4.9% were less than 18 years old, 12% between 18 and 24 years old, 25.3% between 25 and 34 years old, 33.4% between 35 and 49 years old, 18.8% between 50 and 64 years old, and 5.7% 65 years old or older.

The respondents reported that they had visited a mall an average of 5.12 times in an average month with the range from 0 to 30 times. They reported an average expenditure of $71.51 during each visit to the mall with a range from $0.00 to $500.00. Finally, respondents reported that they had bought an average of 1.67 items on the Web in an average month with the range from 0 to 50 items and had spent an average of $31.47 for each Web purchase with a range from $0.00 to $500.00.

Open-Ended Questions Results. Four narrative questions were asked at the beginning of the online web questionnaire. The responses served to give the authors a background perspective of the respondent's use and application of the Web. Many of the responses certainly were hypothesized in various research works; however, this "virtual" chat which also takes place via e-mail between shoppers and the mall Web site gave insights into online relationship-building activities.

Respondents were asked how they found the mall Web site. Responses to this question were somewhat varied; however, the responses made clear that literature from the mall, mall advertisements which highlight the Web site (billboards, print media, radio, television), and search engines played significant roles in assisting shoppers to locate the mall

Web site. Web site referral from a friend or relative also played a significant role. Most often, the referral was made because of a special incentive that was offered at the Web site; e.g., coupons (printable from the home computer), opportunities for gift certificates, and contests—often offering a monetary reward or some form of bonus dollars to be spent at the mall. Many respondents indicated that they were interested in staying knowledgeable about upcoming events both within the shopping mall as well as in the surrounding area. Therefore, they had to search for such information. For example, respondents from the Eastwood Mall site in Niles, Ohio indicated that they were interested in the Mahoning Valley Scrappers baseball team (the Scrappers Stadium being located within the Eastwood Complex), and thus logged onto the Web site.

The respondents were then asked why they visited the mall Web site. Responses to this question were also varied with no clear-cut overall themes. Many respondents did indicate that one reason for visiting the mall Web site was to register for a gift certificate or enter a contest. However, many responses seemed to indicate a curiosity as to what was actually on the Web site. Browsing was a very popular response. The browsing included the desire for information about the mall itself as well as for certain stores within the shopping mall. Some respondents indicated that they were looking for a specific item and were directed to the mall Web site via a search engine. Thus, when they got to the mall Web site, they continued their original search for a particular item. Various other responses include: checking for contests; checking for discounts and sales; looking for driving directions to the mall; searching for a calendar of events; looking for new stores; and searching for job opportunities. No responses indicated a desire on the part of the respondent to actually shop online. The responses mirrored the desire for information about the "bricks-and-mortar mall."

When asked if they found what they wanted, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they did find what they had logged onto the Web site in the hope of finding. The "yes" responses were very favorable and complimentary. These respondents seemed to have established some type of relationship with the mall and the mall Web site. They indicated that they knew where to look on the Web site for specific information and also that they often found additional helpful information in the process. A much smaller number of respondents indicated that they did not find what they were searching for. However, upon close examination of these responses, in several instances respondents *did* find the information for which they were searching. It just was not necessarily what they wanted to find. For example, several respondents indicated that they wanted to know what movies were showing at the mall theaters. They found the information, but they did not want to attend any of those particular movies. Some indicated that they found the information within a targeted store at the mall; however, the store did not carry the brand or specific item for which they were searching. Thus, it was certainly not a result of the mall Web site—rather an unavailability of the exact desired product.

When asked if they would return to the Web site, the overwhelming majority of the respondents indicated that they would absolutely return to the mall Web site. Although some indicated that they would return for the contests, drawings and coupons, many indicated that they simply wanted to stay informed about what "their mall had going on." There seemed to be a sense of mall ownership throughout the responses. It was stated by many respondents that staying informed was important to them—whether they were interested in sales, bargains, store hours, new store openings or future plans of the mall owners. While many did search the mall Web site for opportunities to win something, it was also very clear that much information was taken notice of while searching for those opportunities. Some respondents used the Web site in place of the daily newspaper, although they did indicate that they subscribed to the Sunday newspaper. While some respondents indicated that they "might" return to the Web site, or that it was a "possibility," very few indicated a definite "NO." Of those "NO's," some respondents indicated that they would rather browse or shop in person—that they do not shop online.

It would seem from the narrative responses of this survey that the respondents were interested primarily in browsing, looking for specific products, and looking for information online. The desire to purchase online, however, was not great. Web sites seem to attract attention from respondents if there are opportunities to enter contests, receive coupons, find bargains, etc. The respondents seem to look for general information regarding products, sales, stores and services, and then, to visit the shopping mall to make their actual purchases.

Shopping versus Buying Results. The effect of the respondents' gender and age on their preferences for shopping and buying at malls and on the Web was examined. The results of the 2 × 4 ANOVA analyses for each product category and respondents' preferences for shopping at the mall are presented in Table 6. Because of the sample size, those under 18 years and the 18 to 24 year-olds were combined and the 50 to 64 year-olds and 65+ year-olds were also combined. Significant results at the .05 level are in bold type.

Four of the 36 tests were significant at the .05 level with an additional product category marginally significant at .056. The results generally indicated relationships that were not linear. These results showed that gender and age of the respondents have relatively little effect on the preference of individuals to shop or buy at a suburban regional shopping mall. The few significant effects that were observed tended to be nonlin-

TABLE 6. SHOPPING AND BUYING PREFERENCE MEANS OF DIFFERENT PRODUCT CATEGORIES AT THE MALL BY AGE AND GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS

Product Category	<18 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 49 years	50+ years	F value	Level of sig.
Shopping for leather goods (clothing and accessories)						
Males	6.42	5.78	5.81	6.15	1.153	.330
Females	6.21	5.73	5.59	5.99		
Buying leather goods (clothing and accessories)						
Males	6.36	6.33	5.77	6.27	1.602	.135
Females	6.49	5.82	5.77	6.22		
Shopping for sporting equipment, athletic footwear and athletic apparel						
Males	6.12	5.38	6.00	5.93	.518	.821
Females	6.13	5.91	6.03	5.97		
Buying sporting equipment, athletic footwear and athletic apparel						
Males	6.29	5.60	5.82	5.89	1.904	.068
Females	6.53	6.02	5.98	6.33		
Shopping for health and beauty products (vitamins, bath products)						
Males	5.90	5.44	5.43	5.59	.525	.816
Females	5.96	5.50	5.64	5.65		
Buying health and beauty products (vitamins, bath products)						
Males	5.89	5.33	5.39	5.19	.941	.474
Females	6.03	5.75	5.68	5.92		
Shopping for cameras and VCRs						
Males	4.75	6.00	5.55	5.10	.546	.799
Females	5.17	5.47	4.95	4.97		
Buying cameras and VCRs						
Males	4.44	5.14	5.70	5.13	1.141	.340
Females	5.60	5.54	4.96	5.91		
Shopping for cards, gifts and party supplies						
Males	**6.20**	**5.46**	**5.80**	**6.33**	**2.408**	**.020**
Females	**6.29**	**5.69**	**5.69**	**6.12**		
Buying cards, gifts and party supplies						
Males	6.00	5.25	5.41	5.88	1.883	.071
Females	6.05	5.82	5.65	6.24		
Shopping for children's apparel and accessories						
Males	5.25	6.00	6.08	6.50	.710	.663
Females	6.44	6.09	6.09	6.00		
Buying children's apparel and accessories						
Males	6.33	5.71	5.64	6.50	.714	.660
Females	6.46	6.22	6.11	6.16		
Shopping for consumer electronics, music and videos						
Males	5.31	5.13	5.43	5.90	1.067	.384
Females	5.34	4.92	4.96	5.30		

TABLE 6. (CONTINUED)

Product Category	<18 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 49 years	50+ years	F value	Level of sig.
Buying consumer electronics, music and videos						
Males	5.27	4.75	5.16	5.65	1.144	.335
Females	5.69	5.10	4.98	5.31		
Shopping for home furnishings (furniture and decor)						
Males	6.00	5.87	5.45	5.85	.366	.922
Females	5.73	5.60	5.50	5.90		
Buying home furnishings (furniture and decor)						
Males	6.00	5.50	5.50	5.67	.487	.843
Females	5.75	5.79	5.33	5.79		
Shopping for jewelry and watches						
Males	6.00	5.92	6.00	6.38	.745	.634
Females	6.32	5.87	5.83	5.75		
Buying jewelry and watches						
Males	5.90	5.70	6.00	6.13	.535	.808
Females	6.35	5.87	5.94	6.11		
Shopping for men's apparel and accessories						
Males	6.47	5.81	5.87	6.27	.780	.604
Females	5.98	6.20	6.04	6.26		
Buying men's apparel and accessories						
Males	6.25	5.60	5.62	6.00	1.053	.394
Females	5.92	6.09	5.98	6.32		
Shopping for linens (bedding and towels)						
Males	6.50	5.33	5.50	6.33	.977	.448
Females	6.11	5.67	5.62	6.04		
Buying linens (bedding and towels)						
Males	5.60	5.33	5.88	6.00	1.690	.112
Females	6.00	5.44	5.52	6.32		
Shopping for housewares (dishes, tableware and cookware)						
Males	5.33	5.83	5.56	6.00	.527	.814
Females	5.27	5.69	5.54	5.89		
Buying housewares (dishes, tableware and cookware)						
Males	5.33	5.50	5.25	5.64	1.014	.422
Females	5.22	5.52	5.65	6.16		
Shopping for small appliances (mixers, toasters, hair dryers)						
Males	6.20	5.37	5.70	6.08	.689	.681
Females	5.58	5.70	5.16	5.48		
Buying small appliances (mixers, toasters, hair dryers)						
Males	5.80	4.86	5.73	5.55	.984	.444
Females	5.88	5.61	5.23	5.64		
Shopping for shoes						
Males	6.88	5.71	6.45	6.45	1.429	.191
Females	6.54	6.31	6.25	6.35		

TABLE 6. (CONTINUED)

Product Category	<18 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 49 years	50+ years	F value	Level of sig.
Buying shoes						
Males	6.88	6.25	6.48	6.00	1.984	.056
Females	6.70	6.27	6.24	6.51		
Shopping for books						
Males	5.50	4.57	4.31	5.86	1.246	.277
Females	5.14	5.05	5.28	5.43		
Buying books						
Males	**5.63**	**4.33**	**3.62**	**6.27**	**2.929**	**.005**
Females	**5.14**	**4.92**	**5.20**	**5.58**		
Shopping for toys, games and hobbies						
Males	5.60	5.58	5.19	6.67	1.093	.367
Females	5.77	5.39	5.20	5.62		
Buying toys, games and hobbies						
Males	5.87	5.20	5.15	6.60	1.618	.130
Females	5.94	5.48	5.09	5.68		
Shopping for women's apparel and accessories						
Males	**6.00**	**5.86**	**6.50**	**6.45**	**2.038**	**.049**
Females	**6.43**	**6.19**	**5.95**	**6.44**		
Buying women's apparel and accessories						
Males	**4.60**	**5.71**	**6.38**	**6.33**	**3.379**	**.002**
Females	**6.50**	**6.12**	**6.00**	**6.50**		
Shopping for computer equipment and software						
Males	5.22	4.85	5.00	5.76	.851	.546
Females	5.61	4.83	4.93	5.29		
Buying computer equipment and software						
Males	4.56	4.62	4.94	5.27	1.223	.291
Females	5.89	4.81	5.00	5.49		

ear, indicating that respondents' preferences may be affected more strongly by certain life stages encountered than by age or gender alone.

Further analysis of Table 6 indicates that, as with the pilot study, the respondents showed a high preference for shopping and buying the product categories at the mall. The only rating below the midpoint of 4.0 was from males 35 to 49 years old who rated their preference for buying books at the mall 3.62.

The results of the 2 × 4 ANOVA analyses for each product category and the respondents' preference for shopping and buying on the Web are displayed in Table 7. Significant results at the .05 level are in bold type. Seven of the 36 ANOVA analyses produced significance with an addi-

TABLE 7. SHOPPING AND BUYING PREFERENCE MEANS OF DIFFERENT PRODUCT CATEGORIES ON THE WEB BY AGE AND GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS

Product Category	<18 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 49 years	50+ years	F value	Level of sig.
Shopping for leather goods (clothing and accessories)						
Males	2.25	3.78	3.18	1.56	1.581	.141
Females	2.42	2.40	2.22	2.44		
Buying leather goods (clothing and accessories)						
Males	2.40	2.75	3.29	1.71	1.231	.287
Females	2.52	2.27	2.28	1.98		
Shopping for sporting equipment, athletic footwear, and athletic apparel						
Males	2.50	4.38	2.73	2.19	1.864	.075
Females	2.57	2.61	2.40	2.50		
Buying sporting equipment, athletic footwear, and athletic apparel						
Males	**2.23**	**4.27**	**3.00**	**2.50**	**5.080**	**.000**
Females	**2.06**	**2.16**	**2.16**	**1.66**		
Shopping for health and beauty products (vitamins, bath products)						
Males	2.70	2.88	2.64	2.08	1.093	.367
Females	2.70	2.98	2.29	2.82		
Buying health and beauty products (vitamins, bath products)						
Males	2.50	3.00	2.74	2.20	.808	.581
Females	2.55	2.91	2.30	2.66		
Shopping for cameras and VCRs						
Males	4.57	5.00	3.55	4.00	1.392	.212
Females	3.25	3.17	3.00	3.87		
Buying cameras and VCRs						
Males	4.29	4.13	3.55	3.86	1.831	.086
Females	2.29	3.00	2.43	2.59		
Shopping for cards, gifts and party supplies						
Males	2.29	2.75	2.36	1.43	1.276	.261
Females	2.49	2.95	2.68	2.51		
Buying cards, gifts and party supplies						
Males	1.83	3.13	2.72	1.54	1.287	.256
Females	2.48	2.79	2.44	2.22		
Shopping for children's apparel and accessories						
Males	1.33	3.82	2.57	1.50	1.137	.340
Females	2.73	2.81	3.01	2.49		
Buying children's apparel and accessories						
Males	1.33	3.25	2.75	1.00	1.391	.211
Females	2.65	2.46	2.69	1.81		
Shopping for consumer electronics, music and videos						
Males	4.31	5.29	3.70	3.33	1.939	.063
Females	3.92	4.51	3.70	3.86		

TABLE 7. (CONTINUED)

Product Category	<18 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 49 years	50+ years	F value	Level of sig.
Buying consumer electronics, music and videos						
Males	**3.47**	**5.33**	**3.81**	**2.92**	**2.471**	**.018**
Females	**3.73**	**4.36**	**3.28**	**3.88**		
Shopping for home furnishings (furniture and decor)						
Males	1.75	3.13	2.00	2.00	.986	.443
Females	2.65	3.06	3.04	2.49		
Buying home furnishings (furniture and decor)						
Males	1.75	2.88	2.27	2.00	.831	.563
Females	2.56	2.82	2.68	2.06		
Shopping for jewelry and watches						
Males	3.11	2.73	2.62	1.40	.977	.449
Females	2.98	2.54	2.23	2.88		
Buying jewelry and watches						
Males	2.22	2.80	2.25	1.60	.495	.838
Females	2.66	2.16	2.25	2.54		
Shopping for men's apparel and accessories						
Males	**3.07**	**4.00**	**2.59**	**2.23**	**2.153**	**.038**
Females	**2.34**	**2.86**	**2.78**	**2.11**		
Buying men's apparel and accessories						
Males	**1.93**	**3.88**	**2.90**	**2.45**	**2.681**	**.011**
Females	**2.14**	**2.56**	**2.51**	**1.85**		
Shopping for linens (bedding and towels)						
Males	1.00	3.50	2.11	2.25	1.335	.236
Females	2.83	3.07	3.07	2.35		
Buying linens (bedding and towels)						
Males	1.00	3.67	2.56	3.00	1.190	.310
Females	2.55	2.60	2.85	2.13		
Shopping for housewares (dishes, tableware and cookware)						
Males	1.33	3.50	3.00	2.10	.973	.452
Females	3.17	3.39	3.16	2.67		
Buying housewares (dishes, tableware and cookware)						
Males	1.33	3.00	3.11	2.00	.827	.566
Females	2.88	2.95	2.93	2.25		
Shopping for small appliances (mixers, toasters, hair dryers)						
Males	2.33	4.63	2.36	2.33	1.566	.149
Females	2.77	3.21	3.05	2.29		
Buying small appliances (mixers, toasters, hair dryers)						
Males	2.33	4.57	2.42	2.67	1.652	.125
Females	2.29	2.85	2.64	2.03		
Shopping for shoes						
Males	**2.00**	**2.62**	**2.14**	**1.69**	**2.047**	**.049**
Females	**2.67**	**2.43**	**1.90**	**1.64**		

TABLE 7. (CONTINUED)

Product Category	<18 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 49 years	50+ years	F value	Level of sig.
Buying shoes						
Males	1.64	2.58	2.14	1.82	1.544	.152
Females	2.31	2.17	1.75	1.61		
Shopping for books						
Males	4.29	5.00	4.61	3.70	1.809	.085
Females	3.41	4.85	4.26	4.21		
Buying books						
Males	4.14	4.92	4.94	2.88	1.567	.145
Females	3.63	4.52	4.09	3.78		
Shopping for toys, games and hobbies						
Males	3.71	5.36	3.61	1.75	1.916	.067
Females	4.14	4.43	4.00	3.53		
Buying toys, games and hobbies						
Males	3.29	5.00	3.81	2.00	1.610	.134
Females	3.63	4.02	3.58	3.00		
Shopping for women's apparel and accessories						
Males	**2.80**	**2.86**	**3.20**	**1.93**	**3.533**	**.001**
Females	**3.15**	**3.28**	**2.86**	**1.82**		
Buying women's apparel and accessories						
Males	**2.50**	**2.86**	**3.31**	**1.85**	**2.668**	**.011**
Females	**2.64**	**2.92**	**2.76**	**1.74**		
Shopping for computer equipment and software						
Males	4.75	5.46	4.25	3.89	1.395	.208
Females	3.75	4.72	4.20	3.77		
Buying computer equipment and software						
Males	**4.63**	**5.23**	**4.35**	**3.89**	**2.001**	**.057**
Females	**3.27**	**4.55**	**3.71**	**3.27**		

tional product category producing marginally significant results (.057). For four of the product categories for which significant results were observed (buying sporting and athletic equipment, shopping for men's apparel, buying men's apparel and buying computer software and equipment), males expressed significantly higher preference than did females. The other four significant results were nonlinear.

Unlike the pilot study, certain product categories in this study did have preference means for shopping and buying on the Web above 4.0. Notably, sporting and athletic equipment, cameras and VCRs, consumer electronics, men's apparel and accessories, small appliances, books, toys and hobbies, and computer equipment and software all had means above

4.0. The demographic group most responsible for those means above the midpoint was males 25 to 34 years old.

The results of the pair-wise analyses comparing shopping and buying preferences at the mall for each of the product categories are presented in Table 8. Significance at the .05 level was observed for three of the 18 product categories. The respondents rated buying health and beauty aids, cameras and VCRs and small appliances significantly higher than shopping for these items at the mall.

TABLE 8. SHOPPING PREFERENCES VERSUS BUYING PREFERENCES AT THE MALL

Product Category	N	Shopping Mean	Buying Mean	t-value	Level of sig.
Leather goods	286	5.95	6.07	−1.835	.067
Athletic goods	381	6.04	6.14	−1.846	.066
Health & beauty aids	443	5.67	5.78	−2.546	.011
Cameras/VCRs	163	5.14	5.4?	−2.621	.010
Cards/gifts/party items	424	5.96	5.91	1.420	.156
Children's apparel	250	6.18	6.19	−.245	.807
Consumer electronics	358	5.15	5.23	−1.559	.120
Home furnishings	235	5.70	5.69	.078	.938
Jewelry/watches	271	5.96	6.02	−1.166	.245
Men's apparel	330	6.13	6.07	1.118	.264
Linens/bedding	245	5.86	5.83	.426	.671
Housewares	203	5.67	5.73	−1.014	.312
Small appliances	202	5.51	5.66	−2.266	.025
Shoes	441	6.39	6.40	−.248	.804
Books	326	5.24	5.17	1.242	.215
Toys/games	276	5.41	5.48	−1.326	.186
Women's apparel	438	6.21	6.21	0.00	1.00
Computer equipment	237	5.09	5.12	−.383	.702

The results of the pair-wise analyses comparing shopping and buying preferences on the Web for each of the product categories are presented in Table 9. Significance at the .05 level was observed for 17 of the 18 product categories. In each instance, respondents expressed higher preference to shop than to buy on the Web, similar to the findings observed in the pilot study.

Age Differences Discussion. Given the wired generation, one would expect that the respondents who were less than 18 to 24 years old would be more apt to shop and buy on the Web. This age group, however, tended to express the highest preference ratings for shopping and

TABLE 9. SHOPPING PREFERENCES VERSUS BUYING PREFERENCES ON THE WEB

Product Category	N	Shopping Mean	Buying Mean	t-value	Level of sig.
Leather goods	237	2.50	2.32	2.358	.019
Athletic goods	309	2.52	2.24	3.549	.000
Health & beauty aids	350	2.70	2.58	2.402	.017
Cameras/VCRs	149	3.42	2.85	4.673	.000
Cards/gifts/party items	340	2.57	2.46	1.806	.072
Children's apparel	202	2.68	2.44	2.983	.003
Consumer electronics	314	4.08	3.80	3.625	.000
Home furnishings	183	2.81	2.49	3.249	.001
Jewelry/watches	223	2.61	2.36	2.905	.004
Men's apparel	251	2.73	2.42	4.026	.000
Linens/bedding	197	2.71	2.54	2.311	.022
Housewares	169	3.09	2.76	3.414	.001
Small appliances	152	2.92	2.53	4.288	.000
Shoes	330	2.16	1.95	3.812	.000
Books	280	4.29	4.13	2.256	.025
Toys/games	233	4.00	3.63	4.344	.000
Women's apparel	342	2.83	2.59	4.208	.000
Computer equipment	206	4.30	3.95	3.920	.000

buying at the mall. This finding may indicate that this age group views shopping and buying as social occasions, leading them to prefer to shop and buy at a suburban regional shopping mall where such interaction is possible, as opposed to the Web. Another assumption was that as people get older, they would be less likely to prefer shopping at the malls. As individuals grow older, the physical requirements associated with shopping in large suburban malls, coupled with growing concerns for security and well-being, would logically seem to make shopping and buying at malls less desirable. This conclusion, however, was not supported by the results of this study, especially for males 50+ years old. They expressed the most positive perceptions about the mall regardless of the product category and were least positive about the Web. On the other hand, males 25 to 34 years old were the most negative toward the mall and most positive toward the Web across product categories. Could it be a comfort level operating in both cases?

Another age difference that surfaced was that when graphed, the females' means of shopping and buying at the mall formed a U in several different product categories, with the youngest and oldest females expressing the most favorable perceptions of the mall. Is this result because females 25 to 49 years old have less leisure time to shop at the mall than do other age groups?

Gender Differences Discussion. The females seemed to have the greatest difference between their mean preferences for shopping and buying at the mall, with the buying preferences higher. Some of the male mean preferences would go down from shopping to buying, but almost all of the female mean preferences went up. Are males turning into mall shoppers? With the Web, the male mean preferences all seemed to be higher than the female means across the product categories. Do these ratings suggest that males shop at the mall and then go home to make their purchases on the Web?

Shopping versus Buying at the Mall Discussion. The results of higher buying preferences than shopping preferences for the malls likely reflect the hurried lifestyles of many people: they do not have the luxury to shop around the mall for the best bargain and then buy it. This behavior would be consistent with past research (Gallun, 1996). When customers are in the mall, they are there increasingly to buy. The question that surfaces is, do they use the Web to shop around and then go to the mall to make their purchases?

Shopping versus Buying on the Web Discussion. The results of significantly higher shopping preferences than buying preferences on the Web for nearly all of the products categories support what many people have suspected—that people prefer to shop on the Web but are less likely to buy on the Web. The findings, which could be most disturbing to mall developers and mall-based retailers, were the number of mean preferences that were above the 4.0 mid-point on the scale. In the pilot study, the means did not approach 4.0. In this study, four product categories had means above 4.0 (shopping for consumer electronics, shopping for and buying books and shopping for toys/games). Do the different results suggest a trend in consumers turning to the Web for both shopping and buying in specific product categories that do not require sense experience? A replication of the study in another 12 months might answer the question. However, given the results of both studies, the product categories that will not lose out to the Web seem to be those that the malls tend to carry. Respondents in both studies seem highly unlikely to turn to the Web for apparel, accessories, shoes and home furnishings. These products are those that consumers tend to prefer to experience tactilely before purchase and tend to purchase as a result of such experiences, as opposed to merely seeking to purchase a particular brand or model number.

Future Implications

Given the differences in the results between the pilot study and this study, the latter should be replicated in 12 months to determine trends. The questionnaire would need to be refined so that the section on buying and spending patterns would elicit forced-choice responses. The respondents who completed the questionnaire had accessed a mall Web site. A selection effect could have skewed the results because the respondents, by virtue of going to a mall Web site, could be avid mall shoppers.

■ Overall Conclusions

Many suburban regional shopping malls have fully interactive Web sites designed to allow consumers to take advantage of the Web site's potential while others lack a Web presence. Different mall Web sites revealed different levels of relationship-building activities that would lead to a synergistic rather than an antagonistic role between bricks-and-mortar and the Web. The 16 mall Web sites from which the respondents accessed the online mall Web site survey all tended to have a high degree of relationship-building features. The respondents self-reported that they went to the mall Web sites to search for "general" information regarding products, sales, stores and services. The vast majority of these respondents indicated that they did find the information for which they were searching. The overwhelming majority of the survey respondents indicated that they would return to the mall Web site for contests, drawings and coupons, as well as to stay informed about events that were taking place at "their" malls.

When asked about their shopping and buying preferences at the mall and on the Web, the less than 18-to-24 and the 50+ age groups tended to rate both shopping and buying at the mall higher than did the other age groups. Conversely, the 25-to-49 age group tended to rate items that did not require tactile information higher on the Web than at the mall. In the pilot study, however, regardless of the product category, the mall ratings were higher than the Web ratings. In this study, certain product categories had higher ratings for the Web. The question remains whether the difference between the results of the pilot study (self-reported Web access) and the Web study (questionnaire on the Web) can be attributed to the sampling techniques or changes in consumer preferences over time. Another potential reason for the differences in ratings by the 25-to-49 age group is the time poverty, which that group experiences, as cited in the literature.

When shopping versus buying was compared across the product categories at the mall, the majority of the buying preference means were higher than the shopping preference means. The exact opposite occurred with the Web; i.e., the shopping preference means were significantly higher than the buying preference means on the Web. One possible interpretation of the data could be that when consumers go to the mall, they are more likely to buy rather than shop, as was expected in the past. This finding is consistent with the literature indicating that consumers are spending much less time in malls than they had spent in the past. When consumers access the Web at this point in time, they are more likely to shop for items than buy. These results may suggest that consumers are shopping for items at home on the Web and then going to the malls to make their actual purchases.

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■ Acknowledgments

The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance and cooperation of the Cafaro Company. Their support and partnership on this project truly have been exemplary. Special thanks go to Anthony Cafaro, Jr., Assistant Vice President, and Kevin McGee, Director of Marketing, for their advice and guidance with the Web site questionnaire, the customer e-mail database and their fine camaraderie throughout this project. Thanks also to Jeffrey Reid for his data-entry and editing skills.