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DO YOU WANT TO ENRICH CONSUMERS' EXPERIENCE? LET THEM NEGOTIATE

Você quer enriquecer a experiência dos consumidores? Deixe-os negociar

¿Quiere entiquecer la experiencia de los consumidores? Déjelos negociar

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ABSTRACT

We examine consumer bargaining behaviour in three different countries, Austria, Brazil, and Italy, to provide cross-cultural insights with respect to bargaining intentions, processes, and outcomes. In contrast to previous research, we find that customers bargain for hedonic fulfilment rather than the achievement of a discount. Satisfaction with bargaining outcomes also mediates the relationship between hedonic motivation and intention to bargain. Our results suggest that retailers should enrich customer-shopping experiences by activating their hedonic motives to bargain beyond merely signalling a willingness to negotiate discounts, warranties, and additional services. We identify bargaining intention as a new tool for retailers to increase customer satisfaction in the purchase process.

Keywords: purchase process, customers' experience, bargaining intention, motives to bargain, purchase goals.

RESUMO

Examinamos o comportamento de negociação do consumidor em três países diferentes – Áustria, Brasil e Itália – para fornecer o conhecimento intercultural com relação às intenções, processos e resultados da negociação. Ao contrário de pesquisas anteriores, descobrimos que os clientes negociam em busca de realização hedônica, em vez de obter descontos. A satisfação com os resultados da negociação também medeia a relação entre a motivação hedônica para negociar e a intenção de negociar. Nossos resultados sugerem que os varejistas devem enriquecer as experiências de compra dos clientes ativando suas motivações hedônicas para negociar, indo além de simplesmente sinalizar disposição para negociar descontos, garantias e serviços adicionais. Identificamos a intenção de negociação como uma nova ferramenta para os varejistas aumentarem a satisfação do cliente no processo de compra do cliente.

Palavras-chave: *processo de compra, experiência do cliente, intenção de negociação, motivações para negociar, objetivos de compra.*

RESUMEN

Analizamos el comportamiento de negociación de los consumidores en tres países: Austria, Brasil e Italia con el fin de aportar ideas sobre intenciones, procesos y resultados de la negociación desde una perspectiva cross-cultural. A diferencia de investigaciones previas descubrimos que los consumidores negocian por motivos hedónicos antes que por la consecución de un descuento. Además, la satisfacción con los resultados de la negociación media la relación entre la motivación hedónica y la intención de negociar. Los minoristas deberían enriquecer la experiencia de compra de los clientes activando sus motivaciones hedónicas en lugar de negociar descuentos, garantías o servicios adicionales. Identificamos la intención de negociar como una nueva herramienta para incrementar la satisfacción del cliente en el proceso de compra.

Palabras clave: *proceso de compra, experiencia del consumidor, intención de negociar, motivos para negociar, objetivos de compra.*

INTRODUCTION

Customer experience management (CEM) considers the importance of the creation of appealing offers and communication processes for the development of superior customer experience (Grewal et al., 2017; Verhoef, Lemon et al., 2009; Verhoef, Stephen et al., 2017). In this regard, the interplay of two aspects remains unexplored: the cognitive, emotional, social, and physical responses in CEM and customer goals in the purchase and consumption process (Barbopoulos & Johansson, 2017; Puccinelli et al., 2009). Moreover, bargaining remains an under-examined part of the purchase process and has significant potential to enhance the shopping experience (Chen et al., 2023) by analysing the motivation and goals for bargaining, which can contribute to a more valuable purchase experience (Babin et al., 1994; Cox et al., 2005; Sanchez-Fernandez & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007).

Firms often incentivise customers by using some form of financial reward. Such actions reflect the prevailing view of bargaining as being "the customer's positive attitude toward negotiating over the price of products or services" (Wieseke et al., 2014, p. 37). The main aim of financial rewards is to increase customer loyalty. However, the offer of such rewards is known to undermine a company's price enforcement, thereby creating financial risk for the firm (Burman et al., 2024). This risk is a consequence of assuming that the customers' main motivation for bargaining is the utilitarian pursuit of discounts or financial value, and therefore, insights into consumers' motives would enable retailers and other marketers to offer improved negotiation experiences that could rely less on discounting (Wongkitrungrueng et al., 2023) and less on the mere consideration of price (Li et al., 2023).

In this study, the importance of social, hedonic (Ponsignon, 2022), and utilitarian motives of the consumers are examined (Elmashhara et al., 2024; Li et al., 2020) as part of the motivational-cognitive bargaining model (Thompson, 1990). Specifically, the importance of consumer bargaining is considered through the analysis of bargaining motives, satisfaction with bargaining, and intention to bargain as strategic aspects in understanding consumers' reactions to the introduction of bargaining in the consumption processes. We conclude that bargaining experience management as a tool improves customer shopping experiences (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020).

Our work contributes to the existing literature in four ways. First, a model is developed that integrates features of previous motivational and cognitive models to specify consumers' motives-outcome judgment- behaviour sequence as individual negotiators (Thompson, 1990). Thus, the importance of bargaining motivations is examined for the first time. Second, our work extends the theory of negotiations (Patton & Lewis, 1993) and the expectation-disconfirmation paradigm (Patton & Balakrishnan, 2010) in the context of consumer bargaining (Sharma & Krishnan, 2001), by demonstrating that hedonic bargaining motivations can be more important than utilitarian motivations in customers' satisfaction and intention to bargain. Our findings challenge the dominant perspective in this theory of the primacy of economic motivation for bargaining (Alavi, Habel et al., 2018; Alavi, Wieseke et al., 2016; Wieseke et al., 2014). Third, we expand the study of consumer negotiations (Sharma & Krishnan, 2001) by specifying bargaining as a key part of consumer purchase experiences. In doing so, the parallelism is shown between

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the sequence of (CEM) (Verhoef et al., 2009), the consumer decision process (Puccinelli et al., 2009) and the different phases of the negotiation process (Patton & Lewis, 1993) and the pre-negotiation behavioural motives, negotiation outcomes and post-negotiation intention to bargain (Patton & Balakrishnan, 2010). Fourth, a more practical, relevant investigation of intention to bargain is provided than most previous work on the subject. Bargaining is conceptualised as part of customer experience management (Homburg et al., 2017), thereby highlighting the design of customers' experiences that include bargaining as part of the touch points that enrich the consumer experience (Li et al., 2020). Thus, bargaining is positioned as a strategic tool for establishing long-term relationships, highlighting the importance of bargaining as a source of value for the firm (Sharma & Krishnan, 2001). While previous bargaining studies have predominantly used experiment methodology, our motivational-cognitive model is tested using evidence from consumers with real bargaining experience, thereby providing greater substantive validity than found in previous research. Our study also examines bargaining behaviour in more than one country, providing a more nuanced and more generalisable investigation than previous research.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we analyse previous studies discussing the role of bargaining in the purchase process to develop four testable hypotheses that explain the *motives - outcome - intention* sequence of bargaining. The method used is then described to test these hypotheses, and our findings are presented. We conclude by explaining our contributions to marketing research and practice.

CUSTOMER BARGAINING IN CEM – THE MOTIVATIONAL-COGNITIVE MODEL

It is possible to understand how bargaining can contribute to the enrichment of the customer shopping experiences by analysing the temporal sequence of the customer experience management process proposed by Verhoef et al. (2009) throughout the phases of the consumer decision process proposed by Puccinelli et al. (2009). Both conceptualise a multi-stage process. The pre-purchase stage is characterised by a combination of need recognition, information search, and evaluation (Puccinelli et al., 2009). At this stage, consumers are influenced both by firm-controllable elements, such as loyalty programs, price strategies, retail atmosphere, service interface, and assortment, and by non-controllable elements, such as customer's previous purchase and alternative channel experiences (Verhoef et al., 2009). In the purchase stage, when customers are actively engaged in purchasing, cognitive, affective, and social and physical elements become important to shopping experiences and outcomes. Therefore, the shopping experience includes a temporal purchase process and a decision context that consumers need to navigate to evaluate the outcomes of the experience.

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Evans and Beltramini (1987) suggest that the pre-purchase phase is particularly important in the temporal sequence of price negotiation. This phase encompasses background conditions such as negotiation experience and attitudinal and psychological elements, which inform both outcome expectations and subsequent bargaining strategies. This suggests that positive experiences with bargaining may positively influence consumers' shopping experience and give retailers an opportunity to enhance such experiences by improved management of bargaining experiences, thereby differentiating themselves from competitors and reducing the number of alternatives viewed by consumers during the purchase process (Brucks & Schurr, 1990). Therefore, retailers need to recognise that customers evaluate bargaining experiences differently and that they depend on their motives for bargaining (Thompson, 1990).

In the post-purchase phase, customers create a perception regarding the achieved outcome, including their level of satisfaction with the bargaining experience, which can influence customers' strategies for further transactions, including their future intention to bargain (Evans & Beltramini, 1987). Even when they have had a positive experience, their future bargaining intention will differ depending on whether they attribute the result to their own actions or the retailer (Puccinelli et al., 2009). Since bargaining has seldom featured as an explicit part of retail and marketing strategy, creating desirable bargaining experiences represents what Oliver (1997) calls truly unexpected events. Such events provide unanticipated benefits during the purchase process associated with surprise and curiosity that produce positive attitudinal responses that may drive consumers to continue, complete, and repeat purchasing behaviours. Bargaining enables the realisation of such benefits across all the phases of the purchase process (Puccinelli et al., 2009).

Prior bargaining experience, bargaining motivation, bargaining behaviours, and the evaluation of bargaining outcomes are all related in a motivational-cognitive model (Patton & Balakrishnan, 2010; Patton & Lewis, 1993), which can be a source of value in the management of customer experiences. In particular, understanding the evaluative outcomes can help managers and marketers better design stimuli during the customer journey through the purchase process (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). However, these outcomes are dependent on understanding consumer bargaining motivations (Dawson et al., 1990).

Bargaining motives

A better understanding of customer bargaining behaviours is gained by understanding the underlying motives that drive them (Barbopoulos & Johansson, 2017). Traditionally, bargaining proneness has been studied as the consumers' ability to negotiate reduced prices (Bock & Uncles, 2002; Dawra et al., 2015). Such financial benefits are part of the customers' search for value during the pre-purchase shopping experience (Harris & Mowen, 2001). However, there is recognition that consumer shopping experiences embody, reflect, and are motivated by more than the mere acquisition of goods.

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The customer journey is defined as the series of goal-motivated actions a customer takes to arrive at the moment of purchase (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). While utilitarian motivations have typically been assumed to drive bargaining behaviour (Alavi, Habel et al., 2018; Alavi, Wieseke et al., 2016; Wieseke et al., 2014), hedonic motivations are also recognised as being central to consumer purchasing experiences (Lee & Park, 2024; Li et al., 2020), and social acceptance of purchasing outcomes can also play a major role (Kassaye, 1990). However, the relative importance of different bargaining motives has not previously been examined. Hence, we develop a rationale for the importance of three different bargaining motivations: Utilitarian, Hedonic, and Social.

Utilitarian motives

The main purpose of bargaining is the achievement of utilitarian concessions such as a discount, better terms, greater warranty, extra rewards, and other economic outcomes (Bazerman, 2001; Chen et al., 2022) that enhance the net value achieved (Patton & Balakrishnan, 2010). Previous studies on bargaining identify the concept of customers' specific price importance (CPI), defined as "the relevance of price to the customer's purchase decision compared to other (benefit-related) product attributes" (Alavi et al., 2016, p. 40). Therefore, any concession, such as price reduction, faster delivery, and extended credit terms, directly and positively affects the transaction experience (Li et al., 2023; Pennington, 1968). Furthermore, based on expectancy theory (Oliver, 1997), bargaining outcome satisfaction is largely determined by expectations, where disconfirmation of expectations is likely to exert a bigger impact on outcome satisfaction than confirmation of expectations (Oliver, 1997; Patton & Balakrishnan, 2010). As a result, a positive assessment of bargaining outcomes is probably more pronounced when favourable financial concessions are unanticipated by consumers (Oliver, 1997). Therefore, satisfaction with the outcomes of bargaining depends on the extent to which utilitarian motives are accomplished.

> H1: Utilitarian motives for bargaining positively influence the degree of bargaining outcome satisfaction.

Hedonic motives

Akin to hedonic shopping motives, hedonic bargaining motives relate to hedonic fulfilment, such as experiencing fun, amusement, fantasy, and sensory stimulation (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Chugani et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2006; Rintamäki et al., 2006). Hedonic bargaining motivation reflects the enjoyment of the process and the achievement of experiential outcomes. Previous studies have shown that bargaining behaviour is often a highly emotional and heated process (Bazerman, 2001), where certain participants enjoy the interactive, playful side of bargaining, but

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others do not (Herrmann, 2004). Previous research identifies segments of consumers who prefer to bargain even when there are no financial benefits (Liang & Doong, 2000). Consumers who enjoy bargaining and engage in bargaining for just hedonic reasons experience higher rates of satisfaction with bargaining outcomes than customers who have economic or mixed motivations (Wu et al., 2014). Consequently, there is some empirical and conceptual evidence to hypothesise:

> H2: Hedonic motives for bargaining positively influence the degree of bargaining outcome satisfaction.

Social motives

Consistent with self-presentation theory (Goffman, 1959), certain consumers use shopping experiences to project a particular social image (Sanchez-Fernandez & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007), such as being a savvy shopper. Moreover, to earn such positive attribution from others, customers need to demonstrate bargaining prowess and develop an ability to consistently obtain superior outcomes (Evans & Beltramini, 1987). Furthermore, certain customers develop an ability to bargain effectively in many different contexts, while other consumers fail to develop this ability (Alserhan, 2009), and negotiation skills (Patton & Lewis, 1993) can be a source of admiration in others who are less skilled and achieve poorer outcomes. Bargaining ability is reflected in both private self-consciousness, which refers to personal thoughts about oneself, and public self-consciousness, which refers to individuals' concerns regarding what others think of them (Fenigstein et al., 1975). Individuals with a high public self-consciousness behave to impress others (Roux et al., 2017) and act in accordance with the type of person they are and how they wish others to see them (Chugani et al., 2015; Malhotra, 1988). Therefore, consumers who want to project an image of bargaining prowess probably invest more effort into the bargaining process, leading to better performances and higher levels of satisfaction with both the bargaining process and its outcomes. Therefore, there is conceptual support to hypothesise:

> H3: The level of social motivation to bargain positively influences the degree of bargaining outcome satisfaction.

Customer bargaining behaviour

Satisfaction with the bargaining process and the outcomes of bargaining are expected to influence bargaining behaviours in contexts where consumers have the choice of whether to bargain. Behaviour modification learning theory suggests that consumers develop negative or positive attitudes towards bargaining based on the reinforcement of successful or unsuccessful

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bargaining outcomes (Patton & Lewis, 1993). Negotiations are perceived to be successful when the consumer receives some benefit from the sales interaction (Soldow & Thomas, 1984). Consequently, these consumers are expected to develop greater satisfaction with bargaining. Also consistent with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), these rewards encourage current behaviour (Patton & Lewis, 1993) and future bargaining intention (Lee, 2000). Just as post-acquisition consumer satisfaction affects future product choice (Chugani et al., 2015), customer satisfaction with prior bargaining is expected to explain future bargaining behaviour. Thus, we hypothesise:

> H4: The degree of bargaining outcome satisfaction positively influences future bargaining behavioural intentions.

Culture and bargaining behaviour

Cross-cultural studies in consumer behaviour research have indicated that national culture has a profound influence on all aspects of consumer behaviour, including bargaining attitudes. Hofstede's dimensions of power distance and collectivism, for example, influence the intention to bargain (Lee, 2000).

Although cultural variations might explain differences in individuals' orientations towards bargaining, very few studies have attempted to investigate the intention to bargain from a cross-cultural perspective for consumers. Caputo et al. (2019) found that lower levels of masculinity relate to cooperative negotiation styles in B2B and that individuals with higher levels of power distance and masculinity tend to come off as winners.

Further studies about cultural dimensions and negotiations (Benetti et al., 2021) have proposed that emotional negotiators perceive negotiation meetings as an occasion for social contact because they scored high in uncertainty avoidance. Instead, high individualism results in competitive negotiation styles in B2B, as is the case for the USA.

The relationship between cultural dimensions and consumer bargaining has barely been touched upon in the literature: Alserhan (2009) and Lee (2000) produce studies thereon, although both authors limit their proposals to the financial price paid – the utilitarian goal.

Previous results present contradictions when they relate cultural dimensions and bargaining by consumers and B2B in the bargaining processes. North American consumers are presented as cooperative (Alserhan, 2009; Lee, 2000), contrary to the findings of Benetti et al. (2021), which present these consumers as competitive. Hitherto, no studies have directly measured cultural dimensions and bargaining by consumers in the same way as Caputo et al. (2019) and Benetti et al. (2021) have done for B2B. This underlines how difficult it is to establish a pattern in this field.

Moreover, Sheth (1983) indicates that economic development is one of the major factors that causes intention to bargain to differ from country to country and suggests that money is a more salient concern in less-developed countries, whereas time is more salient in developed

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countries. Empirical evidence also indicates that satisfaction with bargaining, and that from the shopping experience, is influenced by both national culture and economic growth, manifesting to different degrees among consumers in different countries (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Davis et al., 2008).

In this research, consumer bargaining is introduced, whose relationship with cultural dimensions has yet to be directly observed. Although the understanding of the culture consumer theory and its impact on bargaining falls outside the scope, it is clear that socio-economic differences when considering bargaining should be introduced in order to understand any generalisability of results affected by consumers' cultural dimensions (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) and to expand the understanding of this matter.

In summary, any study into consumer bargaining behaviours should consider cultural and socio-economic differences to provide support for the results in terms of generalisability and to provide highlights regarding how cultural differences affect consumer's bargaining.

METHODOLOGY

The hypotheses developed above are tested in the research model with a two-stage approach. In both stages, cross-sectional studies are designed. Data is collected through the application of online questionnaires. Final samples were selected by considering those at our disposal, those of an appropriate age, those who agree to collaborate, and those with experience in bargaining in the past 12 months. This resulted in three convenience samples from various countries.

The data has been analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM) (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). This method enables us to analyse the data by controlling for measurement errors when testing the hypotheses proposed (Study 1) and to analyse cross-country effects by controlling for metric invariance (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998), as presented in Study 2.

Study 1

Study and participants

The research model was first tested using structural equation modeling and a convenience sample of student responses to an electronic survey conducted in Austria to ensure homogeneity in participants so that only respondents with at least one bargaining experience in the past 12 months were included in the sample. The achieved 452 usable respondents ranged in age from 18 to 35, of which 73% lived independently. Demographic analysis (see Table 1) shows that the sample is sufficiently diverse to support covariance analysis (Blair & Zinkhan, 2006).

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Table 1. Demographics Austria

	Age	Education	Percentage	Gender	Percent	Household	Percent
Mean	23.02	High school or equivalent	70.6	Female	52.4	Independent	73
Std. Deviation	3.165	Bachelor's degree	23.5	Male	46.7	With Parents	27
Minimum	18	Master's degree	5.5	No answer	0.9	--	
Maximum	35	Others	0.4	--		--	

Measures

Study constructs were measured using scales established in the marketing literature, which were then adapted to the bargaining context. Bargaining behaviour was measured using two items that capture the respondents' current bargaining behaviour and the intention to bargain in the future, reflecting respondents seeking opportunities to bargain (Chugani et al., 2015) and their intention to bargain in the future as indicators of expected real bargaining behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The two items were adopted from the scale developed by Lee (2000): I1: "I bargain for most purchases I make"; and I2: "I look for opportunities to bargain".

Bargaining satisfaction is conceptualised as the extent to which people are satisfied with their bargaining performance and the outcomes achieved from the negotiation process (Chugani et al., 2015; Oliver, 1997). Two items were employed to measure this construct: S1. "How satisfied were you with the outcome?" and S2. "How satisfied were you with the amount of money you saved?" This second measure reflects the current dominant view in the literature of the primacy of the utilitarian motives. Its inclusion helps to test our model more conservative regarding this dominant view.

The utilitarian motivation to bargain is conceptualised as the achievement of a discount since customers with this motivation are mainly driven to save money (Motive of saving money, MoS hereinafter). Consistent with this conceptualisation, MoS is measured with three items adapted from the scale of utilitarian shopping experiences by Babin et al. (1994): MoS1: "I bargain to save money"; MoS2: "My goal in bargaining is to get the absolute lowest price from the seller"; MoS3: "Bargaining is mainly about getting the best value for your money."

The hedonic motivation to bargain is conceptualised as bargaining just for fun (MFU). Consistent with this conceptualisation, MFU is measured with two items, also adapted from Babin et al. (1994): MFU1: "I bargain for the fun of it"; MFU2: "I consider bargaining as an exciting activity".

Finally, social motivation to bargain is conceptualised as social self-concept (Malhotra, 1988), which refers to how important it is for customers to see themselves as being effective negotiators and how important it is to them that others attribute this skill to them. Consistent

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with this conceptualisation, social motivation to bargain is measured with two items adapted from Malhotra (1988). Motivation of social self-concept (MSS) is measured with two items: MSS1: "I take pride in being able to bargain someone down to a really low price"; and MSS2:"I like to tell others of the successful bargains I have made".

All questions used a Likert scale rated from 1= Strongly disagree to 7= Strongly agree. Demographics were included in the questionnaire to check for diversity.

Table 2. Measurement model

	Loading (Standard error)	T-value	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Bargaining just for fun (MFU)			0.81	0.73
MFU1	0.850 (0.024)***	34.747		
MFU2	0.806 (0.026)***	30.615		
Motive of saving money (MOS)			0.70	0.54
MOS1	0.744 (0.040)***	18.455		
MOS2	0.644 (0.038)***	16.998		
MOS3	0.586 (0.043)***	13.734		
Motivation of social self-concept (MSS)			0.75	0.66
MSS1	0.834 (0.028)***	29.942		
MSS2	0.715 (0.028)***	25.228		
Intention (I)			0.82	0.73
I1	0.859 (0.025)***	34.202		
I2	0.806 (0.025)***	32.564		
Satisfaction (S)			0.65	0.58
S1	0.858 (0.038)***	22.293		
S2	0.512 (0.036)***	14.208		

The correlation between latent factors (Standard errors in brackets) and the Heterotrait-monotrait matrix appear in the lower and the upper segments, respectively.

	MFU	MOS	MSS	S	I
MFU	--	0.215	0.678	0.383	0.606
MOS	0.203 (0.056)***	--	0.723	0.206	0.234
MSS	0.694 (0.036)***	0.744(0.040)***	--	0.375	0.516
Satisfaction	0.704 (0.042)***	0.319 (0.063)***	0.620 (0.042)***	--	0.375
Intention	0.494 (0.046)***	0.182 (0.060)***	0.431 (0.049)***	0.853(0.040)***	--

Model fit WLSMV: Chi-Square=138.172; d.f.=34; p-value<0.000; p-value<0.000 ; RMSEA=0.082; CFI=0.970; TLI=0.951; SRMR=0.042. NOTE: *** significant at 0.001.

Analysis

For the reliability and validity of scales, Structural Equation Modelling (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012) was employed, whereby all scales used were Likert 1-7, and variables were treated as ordinal (Wu & Leung, 2017). The model was therefore estimated with diagonal least squares (WLSMV) (Li, 2016). All analyses were conducted with Mplus®, except for the HTMT matrix, calculated with matrixpls, R. All items in the measurement model (see Table 2) presented significant factor loadings, the lowest of which was 0.512 for S2. This item was maintained in the analysis by adopting the 0.5 cut off proposed by Bagozzi and Yi (2012), which is recommended when items are important for the measurement of the concept defined. This was the case of S2, which refers to the achievement of a result in terms of money: a key element for the evaluation of the success of bargaining. Since complex measurement models sometimes present convergence problems and ignore how traits can be affected by method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), two methods were combined to test for the common method bias. First, we tested the existence of common variance unexplained by the existence of correlations between the measurement errors of the items proposed. The results showed that correlations were not significant. As a second step, common variance existing across traits was analysed using the HTMT matrix (see Table 2) that enables the identification of the existence of common variance across traits as an alternative when multi-methods cannot be used (Henseler et al., 2015). The results indicate no method bias. Discriminant validity was assessed by analysing the correlation among latent factors. The correlation between intention to bargain (I) and satisfaction with bargaining outcomes (S) was 0.858. The correlation between MoS and MSS was 0.744. Confidence intervals at the 95% level of confidence were calculated, none of which included the value 1, thereby supporting discriminant validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). Additional evidence of discriminant validity was provided by HTMT matrix analysis, which for our model showed values lower than 0.85 (see Table 2) for all the pairs of constructs under analysis, which in turn, according to Henseler et al. (2015), supports discriminant validity.

The hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling while controlling for possible indirect effects of bargaining motivations on the intention to bargain. However, as shown in Table 3, the indirect effects were not significant. Of the bargaining motivations, only hedonic motivation (MFU: bargaining for fun) was found to exert a significant effect on bargaining satisfaction. This is interesting since one of the two indicators of bargaining satisfaction reflected monetary satisfaction, which has a utilitarian connotation. As expected, the relationship between bargaining satisfaction and intention to bargain (H4) was also significant. The results point to a mediator role of satisfaction between MFU and the intention to bargain

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Table 3. Hypotheses testing

Dependent	Independent	Austria β (t-value)
Satisfaction (S)	MFU (H2)	0.447 (3.473)**
	MOS (H1)	-0.072 (-0.225)
	MSS (H3)	0.358 (1.457)
Intention	MFU	-0.034 (-0.257)
	MOS	0.103 (0.357)
	MSS	-0.163 (-0.714)
	S (H4)	0.800 (4.814)***

Note: ** p-value<0.05; ***p-value<0.001. Chi-Squared=1617.009; d.f.= 34; p-value <0.01; RMSEA=0.067; SRMR=0.042; CFI= 0.956. Robust model fit: S-B Chi-Square=94.888; p-value <0.01; RMSEA=0.063; SRMR=0.042; CFI=0.953.

Study 2

The results from Study 1 indicate that bargaining for fun is the only bargaining motivation that can explain satisfaction with bargaining. However, our findings may be context-specific or idiosyncratic because Study 1 was based on a single country: Austria. Several studies advocate testing the generalisability of results by examining models across cultures (e.g., Bagozzi et al., 2000; Lee et al., 2013).

Study and participants

We replicated Study 1 in the country contexts of Italy and Brazil. Hofstede's cultural values of collectivism and power distance are important regarding the intention to bargain (Alserhan, 2009; Lee, 2000), and the scores of Austria, Italy, and Brazil vary widely on these values (Table 4). To assess economic development, GDP per capita was employed, using data from the World Bank Databank. According to this measure, Italy (GDP/capita: USD 33,889) and especially Brazil (GDP/capita: USD 11,212) lag far behind Austria (GDP/capita: USD 47,604). Therefore, these three countries of analysis represent a continuum of economic development suitable for a robust cross-cultural test of our model (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

In terms of method, the same procedure as in Study 1 was used, with data was collected in the same way to guarantee the homogeneity of the population under analysis. The samples (100 respondents from Brazil and 147 from Italy) demonstrated similar demographic properties to the Austrian sample and presented sufficient diversity to support covariance analysis (Blair & Zinkhan, 2006).

Table 4. Hofstede's scores for countries under investigation in Study 1 and Study 2

	Austria	Italy	Brazil
Individualism	55	76	38
Power Distance	11	50	69
Masculinity	79	70	49
Uncertainty avoidance	70	75	76
Long-term orientation	60	61	44

Note: https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison

Analysis

Metric invariance was examined using the method alignment approach (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014), whereby it was found that approximate measurement invariance holds for all groups and items. Consequently, mean differences for factors and measurement properties are consistent and acceptable across groups. By maintaining cross-country invariance in the analysis and using the same items described above, our model was tested separately for the two other country samples (Table 5). SEM results showed that similar to Austria, Hypotheses H2 and H4 are supported in the Italian sample. Hypothesis H2 is supported for Brazilians who also experience greater satisfaction when they bargain for fun, but this satisfaction does not result in a higher intention to bargain. Together, these results demonstrate cross-cultural consistency in the intention to bargain, at least in the primacy of the relationship between bargaining for fun and bargaining satisfaction.

Table 5. Hypotheses tested across countries

Dependent	Independent	Austria β (t-value)	Brazil β (t-value)	Italy β (t-value)
Satisfaction (S)	MFU (H2)	0.450 (3.030)**	0.567 (1.964)**	0.429 (2.187)**
	MOS (H1)	-0.113 (-0.331)	0.866 (1.055)	-0.076 (-0.226)
	MSS (H3)	0.378 (1.468)	0.100 (0.264)	0.565 (1.237)
Intention	MFU	-0.045 (-0.338)	0.105 (0.179)	-0.080 (-0.528)
	MOS	0.096 (0.334)	0.761 (0.478)	-0.081 (-0.335)
	MSS	-0.184 (-0.833)	-0.233 (-0.557)	0.190 (0.398)
	S (H4)	0.774 (5.164)***	1.021 (1.056)	0.793 (2.920)**

Note: Model Fit: Chi-Squared=302.003; d.f.=126; p-value<0.00; RMSEA=0.077; CFI=0.928; SRMR=0.066. Robust S-B Chi-Squared=284.126; p-value<0.00; RMSEA=0.073; SRMR=0.066.

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Post hoc analysis

To provide a deeper understanding of cultural differences, we sought further insight by comparing mean value differences across countries. Mean comparison was conducted using the alignment method implemented in Mplus 7.1®, which, for a small number of groups, is more powerful than the scalar methods (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014). Table 6 shows the significant results ranked in descending order. The first column presents the most significant ranking, and the second column indicates the group tested as the reference group. The column value presents the value for the test and the last column includes those groups with a significantly smaller mean factor.

Table 6. Factor mean comparison at the 5% significance level in descending order

Ranking	Group	Value	Groups with Significantly Smaller Factor Mean
Results for MFU Factor			
1	Brazil	0.496	Austria
2	Italy	0.472	Austria
3	Austria	0.000	
Results for MOS Factor			
1	Italy	0.229	Brazil
2	Austria	0.000	
3	Brazil	-0.424	
Results for MSS Factor			
1	Brazil	0.487	Austria
2	Italy	0.311	Austria
3	Austria	0.000	
Results for Satisfaction Factor			
1	Italy	0.047	Brazil
2	Austria	0.000	Brazil
3	Brazil	-0.687	
Results for Intention Factor			
1	Austria	0.000	Brazil
2	Italy	-0.221	Brazil
3	Brazil	-1.043	

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DISCUSSION

Regarding motivation, Austria shows the lowest mean values for hedonic motivation and social motivation, while Italy and Brazil can be considered similar for these two factors. This is consistent with previous research findings (e.g., Lee, 2000) since consumers belonging to countries that have low scores regarding power distance, such as Austria (Table 6), are expected to demonstrate minor bargaining intention. As shown in Table 4, Austrian consumers score high in masculinity values (i.e., competitiveness) and low in femininity values (i.e., conformity), which could explain their low scores on social motivation. Brazil presents lower mean values of utilitarian motives than Italy, while Italy and Austria present no differences regarding their utilitarian motivation. This finding might be explained by the trend of emerging economies, such as Brazil, that are becoming extremely economically attractive because consumers' purchasing power is constantly increasing (Batra et al., 2000; Burgess & Steenkamp, 2006). As a result, individuals may not necessarily have utilitarian motives for bargaining as their reference points, but instead, they might perceive bargaining as an effortless socialisation activity. This is consistent with the fact that Brazil has the significantly lowest mean value for intention to bargain and for satisfaction with bargaining.

For all the countries analysed, hedonic bargaining motivation shows a direct and positive effect on satisfaction with bargaining. Moreover, except for Brazil, satisfaction with bargaining results in higher levels of intention to bargain. These results highlight the importance of hedonic motives over others and how social motives are less important for achieving bargaining satisfaction, which in turn indicates that bargaining is reflected in private self-consciousness and mere personal enjoyment rather than in public self-consciousness (Fenigstein et al., 1975).

Although Austrian respondents present the lowest mean values of social and hedonic bargaining motivation, the significant effect of hedonic motivation on satisfaction indicates that creating satisfaction with bargaining seems to be through the design of enjoyable experiences, even for those for whom the hedonic motives remain low.

The lack of effect of satisfaction on intention for the Brazilian sample is somewhat unexpected. Kashima et al. (1992) show that the drive for consistency in collectivistic cultures is relatively weak. Consequently, in the case of Brazil, since it is a collectivistic country, consumers might lack the drive for consistency and, therefore, believe that their intention to bargain in the future might vary across situations and across consumption settings, which remain unknown.

CONCLUSIONS

The first image that comes to mind when considering bargaining is probably that of vendor and buyer bargaining in a market (Nordhagen et al., 2023). Our study informs this practical context by examining the impact of various motives for bargaining on customer satisfaction with bargaining outcomes. Across three diverse cultures, Austria, Italy, and Brazil, we find

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that consumers gain the most satisfaction from bargaining for the hedonic fun of it, not from utilitarian savings or from demonstrating bargaining prowess (Wu et al., 2014; Yüksel, 2007). Our research provides new insights into how motives explain satisfaction and behaviours in retailing (Dawson et al., 1990) and how unexpected positive results in the interaction during the bargaining, which can be observed in a satisfactory perception of the outcome of a bargain, can drive individuals to engage in future bargaining behaviour and, consequently, further purchases driven by the joy of bargaining (Razmus et al., 2024). This phenomenon supports the unexpected outcome premise by Oliver (1997), which suggests that unexpected positive outcomes in shopping experiences reinforce the experience and behaviours to the extent that the main motive identified in this research is the hedonic element. We can conclude that satisfaction gained from unexpected pleasure is a positive reinforcement that encourages future shopping behaviour. By finding strong links in the bargaining motivation-satisfaction-behaviour relationship, we can conclude that managing this relationship affords retailers and other marketers an opportunity to improve consumer journeys (Kuehnl et al., 2019) and to explore the path between hedonic and utilitarian variables to design and understand customer touch points (Kim et al., 2024; Li et al., 2020).

Theoretical contributions

Compared with previous research, our findings challenge the traditional utilitarian viewpoint and introduce an innovative angle in the understanding of the consumer-retailer relationship by suggesting that the pleasure-driven approach significantly influences the intention to engage in bargaining through the satisfaction achieved. The introduction of bargaining as part of the purchase process is revealed as an opportunity to enrich customer shopping experiences through motivations that are both innovative and temporary (Bottger et al., 2017) that reduce the likelihood of customers evaluating alternatives in the early stages of the purchase process (Brucks & Schurr, 1990). This could also drive marketing efforts towards maintaining long-term relationships with the consumer (Schurr & Ozanne, 1985).

The analysis of goals in the B2B purchase process has recently been approached by Scholten et al. (2024) by considering cost saving as the main reason to bargain. In contrast, ours is the first study that presents the analysis of goals in the consumer purchase process by revealing how bargaining can be a source of value for the firm if it is proposed as an enjoyable experience rather than a transactional tool. In this vein, Barokas and Sherman (2024) show that happier consumers bargain less for a discount and interact more. Therefore, the experience of bargaining can be presented as a source of happiness and socialisation, and it opens the possibility for bargaining to be used as an opportunity to develop a customer journey wherein the discount is not the only expected reward, which in turn expands CEM (Verhoef et al., 2009).

Finally, the cross-country analysis helps to provide generalisability to our research by considering countries with different socio-economic and cultural factors, which provides valuable

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insights into cultural influences on bargaining behaviours and expands the consumer culture theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

Managerial implications, limitations, and further research

Managing customer journeys is particularly important in online shopping (Backus et al., 2020), where sales staff are not present to drive consumer experiences (Wongkitrungrueng et al., 2020). Bargaining could be an important part of the consumer online shopping journey (Batat & Hammedi, 2023), and our findings suggest the need to develop strategies that appeal to hedonic bargaining motives.

Further research should focus on the design and management of online experiences based on bargaining that may drive the relationship between consumers and retailers to grow into a valuable relationship for both parties and may advance in the effort to understand how value is created in the channel (Pasirayi & Fennell, 2021). Therefore, from a managerial perspective, our findings may give retailers some insights regarding an opportunity to improve the design of stimuli in consumer experience. First, expectations of future intention to bargain are known to affect concessions during the bargaining process. This means that management of these expectations would play a major role in the cultivation of long-term relationships. To manage customer experiences, retailers should understand managerial stimuli and the consumer's response (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). One option could be to understand how online retailers can develop such a capability to bargain, perhaps similar to that proposed for inter-firm relationships (Costa & Zemsky, 2021) to improve the customer journey (Li et al., 2020), even in countries where bargaining is not common practice.

We propose bargaining as a learning process resulting from repeated bargaining behaviours. However, the data used herein is cross-sectional, which gives a limited overview of the development of intentions to bargain over time. Another limitation of this study is the number of variables analysed. Although our study has focused on the impact of key bargaining motives on bargaining satisfaction and future bargaining behaviour, there remain many other subjective elements that affect the result of a negotiation process (Sebenius, 1992) that are affected by individual characteristics and cognitive processes (Thompson, 1990). These other subjective elements might further inform our understanding of consumer intention to bargain.

Lastly, one of the main constraints is the scarcity of individual and socio-economic previous analyses involving consumer bargaining. Further research should open the scope of current knowledge by measuring cultural dimensions and directly observing their relationship with bargaining (Benetti et al., 2021) both by expanding the consumer culture theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) with the analysis of more countries with a greater variety of cultures to observe individual, cultural, and socio-economic effects and explore motives in different retail settings.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

María Ángeles Ramón-Jerónimo: formal analysis, project administration Writing – review & editing
Katerina Makri: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing
Barbara Stoettinger: conceptualization, data curation, investigation, project administration
Brock Smith: conceptualization, data curation, Writing – review & editing