"Migrating" to New Service Providers: Toward a Unifying Framework of Consumers' Switching Behaviors

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This article explores the applicability of a model of migration from the human geography literature as a unifying, theoretical framework for understanding consumers' service provider switching behaviors. Survey data from approximately 700 consumers are used to examine the usefulness of the push, pull, and moorings (PPM) migration model. The PPM migration model performs better than an alternative model; all three categories of antecedents to switching (migration)—push, pull, and mooring variables—have significant direct, and some moderating, effects on switching intentions.

Keywords: *service provider switching; migration*

Service provider switching can have a significant impact on a firm; it is therefore important to understand why customers switch service providers. Variables that might influence switching include *quality and satisfaction* (e.g., Dabholkar and Walls 1999; McDougall and Levesque 2000), *value* (e.g., Bansal and Taylor 1999a), the *perceived costs of switching* (e.g., Ping 1993), *alternative attractiveness* (e.g., Jones, Mothersbaugh, and Beatty 2000), *attitudes toward switching* (e.g., Bansal and Taylor 1999b), *trust* (e.g., Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001), *commitment* (e.g., Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, and Gremler 2002), *social influences*, and the propensity for *variety seeking* (e.g., Bansal and Taylor 1999a, 2002). To date, a comprehensive study of these determinants has yet to be conducted. In addition, attempts at providing a theoretical framework for these relationships have been limited (for exceptions, see Bansal and Taylor 1999b, 2002).

The notion of people switching between one entity and another is not limited to marketing situations; theoretically based, comprehensive models of switching do exist in other literatures. In fact, the human geography literature contains a number of studies investigating switching behavior; specifically, "migration" research examines switching between locales. The correspondence between migration and customers' switching behavior is appealing. Whereas migration involves the flow of people from one geographic area to another, service provider switching involves the flow of customers from one service provider to another. Clark and Knapp (1996) already pointed out this analogy in the migration literature: "Just as individuals shop for consumer goods, potential migrants compare the attributes of alternative locations and express those preferences by moving to the location that best satisfies them" (p. 3).

The "push-pull" framework (Bogue 1969, 1977), with extensions to include intervening or mooring variables (Lee 1966; Moon 1995), is a dominant paradigm in migration research. Essentially, this paradigm suggests that there are negative factors at the origin that push people away, while positive factors at the destination act to pull people toward them. These push and pull factors interact

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with "mooring variables"—personal and social factors that can either hold potential migrants to their place of origin or facilitate migration to the new destination (Moon 1995).

This article empirically explores the applicability of the push-pull- mooring (PPM) paradigm to service switching. In doing so, it contributes to the services marketing literature in a number of ways. First, the PPM model is proposed as a unifying framework for understanding consumers' switching behaviors. At present, the marketing literature lacks comprehensive models of service provider switching. Cronin, Brady, and Hult (2000) argued that composite models of consumer decision-making in service environments are necessary to minimize the risk of developing strategies that either overemphasize or understate the significance of certain variables. The PPM model addresses this concern and lends theoretical justification for the inclusion of certain predictor variables. In particular, the PPM model underscores the importance of mooring variables as drivers of migration; in marketing, these switching predictors have not received as much attention as push and pull variables. Second, the PPM model provides a theoretical foundation for identifying key moderating relationships among drivers of service provider switching; our study examines these relationships empirically. Finally, the article considers how the PPM model and related migration literature can be used to suggest new predictors of switching and to understand other facets of switching, such as the segmentation of migrants/switchers (refugees, nomads, return migrants, and people with multiple residence/polygamous buyers) and the cultural/social implications for both the switched-from (origin) and switched-to (destination) providers.

The article proceeds as follows: First, an overview of key migration constructs is presented and the analogies to service switching established. The PPM framework is then applied to a service-switching context, how each of the previously suggested determinants of customers' switching behaviors fit into the PPM model is examined, and main-effects hypotheses are presented. Furthermore, hypotheses regarding moderating effects between mooring variables and push and pull effects are developed. This is followed by a description of an empirical test, the results, and a discussion of the results. Theoretical and managerial implications are then offered.

MIGRATION

Migration involves "the movement of a person (a *migrant*) between two places for a certain period of time" (Boyle, Halfacree, and Robinson 1998:34). Typically, this movement is assumed to be significant, meaning that the individual has moved across a definite administrative boundary (Jackson 1986; Pryor 1981). The migration literature examines a broad range of movements, from migrations across countries (*international migration*) to migration within the same country (*internal migration*; Champion and Fielding 1992). Migration also has a temporal component; researchers in this area distinguish between *temporary migration*, where the individual maintains his or her permanent place of residence but is away for a period of time, and *permanent migration*, where there is a clear change of residence (Jackson 1986). Migration researchers have found that the duration of time considered appropriate for a move to be considered migration is impossible to define; however, it is generally accepted that the move should have some permanence, thus distinguishing migration from *spatial mobility* (Boyle et al. 1998). Hence, holidays and business trips would not be considered *migration*.

Researchers in the human geography area also differentiate various types of migrants. *Voluntary* migrants freely decide to migrate; although there may be factors in the migrant's own situation that constrain or facilitate the migration decision, there are no formal constraints (Jackson 1986). On the other hand, *refugees* have no choice but to migrate (Boyle et al. 1998), due to factors such as persecution, war, or famine.[1] Thus, the migration literature addresses a broad range of decisions that vary in importance, complexity, and consequences. Indeed, in the study of migration, "no restriction is placed upon the distance of the move or the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act, and no distinction is made between external and internal migration" (Lee 1966:49). Owing to global integration and improvements in transportation and communication, migration has become less risky and costly and no longer entails a long-term commitment to a given destination (Tsuda 1999).

The analogies between these migration constructs and the phenomenon of service provider switching are reasonably straightforward. Migrants (consumers) move (switch) from one country (service provider) to another. They may freely choose to migrate (switch) between service providers and thus would be *voluntary migrants*. Alternatively, they may feel that they have no choice but to migrate (switch) when, for example, their current service provider closes up shop; these consumers would be *refugees*. The migration (switching) movement may also be conceptualized according to its significance or the degree of change involved. At one end of the continuum, this movement may be modest: consumers may migrate (switch) between various service providers within one service organization (e.g., switching from their broker Tom to a different broker, Alice, at the same brokerage firm) or between different delivery mechanisms with one service provider (e.g., switching to online banking with Bank A instead of using Bank A's tellers or telephone banking). These switching movements could be considered *intraurban migration or residential mobility.* At the other

end of the continuum, consumers may switch from one type of service provider to another type to fulfill a given need—for instance, switching from a health club membership to plastic surgery to enhance their physical appearance—a significant movement akin to *international migration*. Between these two extremes, consumers frequently switch between brands of service providers; this behavior is conceptually similar to movements within national boundaries but across urban locations (*national migration*).

The present research examines the determinants of switching between different brands of service providers, a phenomenon analogous *to national migration*. A predominant model in the migration literature also focuses on national migration, studying "the migrant who remains within the same broad cultural context (such as within the same nation or ethnic group), but travels away from the confines of the general area in which he or she previously resided" (Moon 1995:505). This model is now described.

THE PPM MODEL OF MIGRATION

The push-pull component of the PPM model of migration has a long history, dating back to the nineteenth century. Ravenstein's "Laws of Migration," presented to the Royal Statistical Society in 1885, laid the foundation for the push-pull model. In 1938, Herberle fully articulated the distinction between push and pull factors (Lewis 1982). It has been argued that this model, in a modified form, represents the most important theoretical contribution in the migration literature to the present day (Jackson 1986). According to the push-pull paradigm, there are factors at the origin that encourage (push) an individual to leave and factors at the destination that attract (pull) the individual toward it (Lewis 1982). This research has traditionally focused only on actual migrants—those who have switched, not those who have chosen not to switch. Accordingly, researchers centered their attention on identifying only *negative* factors at the origin (thus the label of "push" variables) and *positive* factors at the destination (hence the "pull" label).

Early migration studies looked at aggregate-level push and pull concepts. For example, Bogue (1969) claimed that push factors could include, for example, decline in a natural resource or prices paid for it; loss of employment; oppressive treatment due to political, religious, or ethnic affiliations; lack of opportunities for personal development, employment, or marriage; and natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, fire, or epidemics. Pull factors could include, for instance, superior opportunities for employment, higher income, or education; preferable environment and living conditions; and opportunities for new activities, environment, or people. This "macro-analytic" model is appropriate for studying broad patterns of migration flows but does not account well for individual migration decisions (Lewis 1982). Beginning with key articles by Wolpert (1965, 1966), there was increased attention on a migrant's *perceptions* of push and pull factors. Instead of explaining migration by objective environmental variables, this approach recognized the impact of differences in migrants' perceptions (Lewis 1982). As Lee (1966) observed, "It is not so much the actual factors at origin and destination as the perception of these factors which results in migration" (p. 51). Consequently, migration researchers began to focus their attention on individuals' subjective perspectives (De Jong and Fawcett 1981).

Around the same time, researchers recognized that normative and psychosocial variables were important in migration decisions (Germani 1965). To account for these variables, Lee (1966) added the construct "intervening obstacles" to the push-pull model. According to his conceptualization, the migration decision is based on an evaluation of the push and pull factors; however, this evaluation is made within the context of an individual's own personal and social context. Migration decisions can be modified by such factors as family attachments, personal anxiety, or costs of the move. Jackson (1986) modified Lee's (1966) labeling of "intervening obstacles"; he argued that migration models should include "*intervening variables*," not obstacles, since these variables either facilitate or inhibit migration. In a similar vein, Longino (1992) introduced the notion of "*moorings*," which Moon (1995) then incorporated into a push-pull model of migration. Moorings refer to life-course, cultural, and spatial issues that act to facilitate or hamper the migration decision. Thus, moorings expand the notion of intervening variables; they include all personal, social, and cultural variables that moderate the decision whether or not to migrate. We adopt the "mooring" terminology for the present study.

In sum, recent migration research acknowledges that migration decisions are based on perceptions of macro-level push and pull variables, but that micro-level variables such as personal and social factors also play a role. To predict migration, one must therefore examine the migrants' perceptions of variables at the origin that might act to push them away (push variables), perceptions of variables at the destination that might act to draw migrants toward it (pull variables), and perceptions of person-specific variables that act either to facilitate or to hamper the migration decision (mooring variables).

THE PPM MIGRATION MODEL OF SERVICE SWITCHING

Table 1 lists selected marketing studies that examine one or more of the most commonly studied predictors of service provider switching: quality, satisfaction, value,

TABLE 1
Selected Prior Empirical Research on Service Provider Switching

	Push Effects						*Pull Effects*	*Mooring Effects*				
	Quality	*Satisfaction*	*Value*	*Trust*	*Commitment*	*Price Perceptions*	*Alternative Attractiveness*	*Attitude Toward Switching*	*Subjective Norms*	*Switching Costs*	*Prior Switching Behavior*	*Variety Seeking*
Bansal and Taylor (2002)								SI	SI	SI/SB		
Bansal and Taylor (1999a)	Sat/Att	SI						SI	Att	SI		
Bansal and Taylor (1999b)			SI				SI			SI		
Blackwell, Szeinbach, Barnes, Garner, and Bush (1999)			RI									
Bolton, Kannan, and Bramlett (2000)										RB		
Colgate and Hedge (2001)						SB						
Colgate and Lang (2001)							RB			RB		
Colgate and Norris (2001)	SB/RB						RB/SB			RB/SB		
Cronin, Brady, and Hult (2000)	Sat/BI	BI	Sat/BI									
Dabholkar and Walls (1999)	SI					SI						
Ganesh, Arnold, and Reynolds (2000)											BI	
Garbarino and Johnson (1999)		BI		BI	BI							
Grace and O'Cass (2001)	SB											
Hennig-Thurau (2001)	BI			BI	BI							
Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, and Gremler (2002)		BI			BI							
Jones, Mothersbaugh, and Beatty (2000)		RI					RI			RI		
Keaveney (1995)	SB			SB		SB	SB					
Lee and Cunningham (2001)	RI									RI		
Lee, Lee, and Feick (2001)	RI									RI		
Liu, Furrer, and Sudharshan (2001)									SI			
Mittal and Lassar (1998)	Sat	SI										
Ratner, Kahn, and Kahneman (1999)												SB
Roos (1999)	SB					SB						
Sharma and Patterson (2000)		Com		Com			Com			Com		
Sirdeshmukh, Singh, and Sabol (2002)			BI	Val/BI								
Vanhamme and Lindgreen (2001)				SB								
Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996)	SI											

NOTE: The dependent variable examined in each article is listed in each cell. They include the following: SB = switching behavior; BI = behavioral intentions; RI = repurchase intention; RB = repatronage behavior; SI = switching intention; Att = attitude toward switching; com = commitment; sat = satisfaction; val = value.

trust, commitment, price perceptions, alternative attractiveness, social influences, switching costs, prior switching behavior, and variety-seeking tendencies. The literature also documents the impact of service encounter events, such as service failure and recovery, on service switching (e.g., Keaveney 1995). These variables are not included here, however, since they are conceptualized as antecedent to the predictors listed above. In other words, the impact of service encounter events on service provider switching is mediated by the evaluative responses they elicit in customers. This approach is consistent with recent research examining the consequences of service failure and recovery on satisfaction (Hess, Ganesan, and Klein 2003), commitment, and trust (Bejou and Palmer 1998)—variables captured in the list of service-switching predictors above. The PPM migration model provides a useful framework to unify these predictor variables. Figure 1 illustrates the PPM model of service provider switching. The next section details how these previously studied service-switching predictors fit into the PPM migration framework.

Push Effects

Push factors are "the factors that motivate people to leave an origin" (Stimson and Minnery 1998) and "factors at the origin that are assumed to have a negative influence on the quality indicators of life" (Moon 1995). Push factors are generally perceptions of place variables—characteristics of the place of origin that influence the migration decision (Bogue 1977; Lee 1966). There is a conceptual correspondence between the construct of push factors from the migration literature and many evaluative drivers of service-switching intentions, such as satisfaction, quality, value, trust, commitment, and price perceptions.

The term *satisfaction* is used extensively in the migration literature; migration research emphasizes satisfaction and dissatisfaction with factors at the origin (De Jong and Fawcett 1981). Wolpert's (1965) concept of "place utility" popularized the notion that migrants would leave when dissatisfied. In services research, the negative relationship between satisfaction with a service provider and switching intentions is well documented (e.g., Bansal and Taylor 1999b; Cronin et al. 2000).

The term *quality* is also common in migration research, where investigations of "quality of life" examine variables such as physical and economic factors associated with the origin (Boyle et al. 1998). In a service context, perceived quality exerts a direct and indirect influence on repurchase (e.g., Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1996).

Value, the trade-off between quality and sacrifice (Zeithaml 1988), is proposed as a third push factor in switching decisions. Recent research suggests that value is a direct determinant of service switching (e.g., Sirdeshmukh, Singh, and Sabol 2002).

In migration research, a person's trust in his or her relations with others represents a push factor (Richmond 1988). Trust, the consumer's feeling that the seller will fulfill promises (Morgan and Hunt 1994), is an antecedent of consumers' future behavioral intentions (e.g., Garbarino and Johnson 1999). Trust is also a strong predictor of commitment (Sharma and Patterson 2000), which leads, in turn, to repurchase intentions (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002). Commitment—defined as a consumer's belief that an ongoing relationship is worth investing in (Sharma and Patterson 2000)—and trust are thus posited as push variables.

Finally, since economic variables are critical in migration models (Bogue 1969), it is appropriate to consider pricing issues in models of service migration. Extant research suggests that consumers are more likely to switch if they perceive their current service provider's prices to be high (e.g., Dabholkar and Walls 1999).

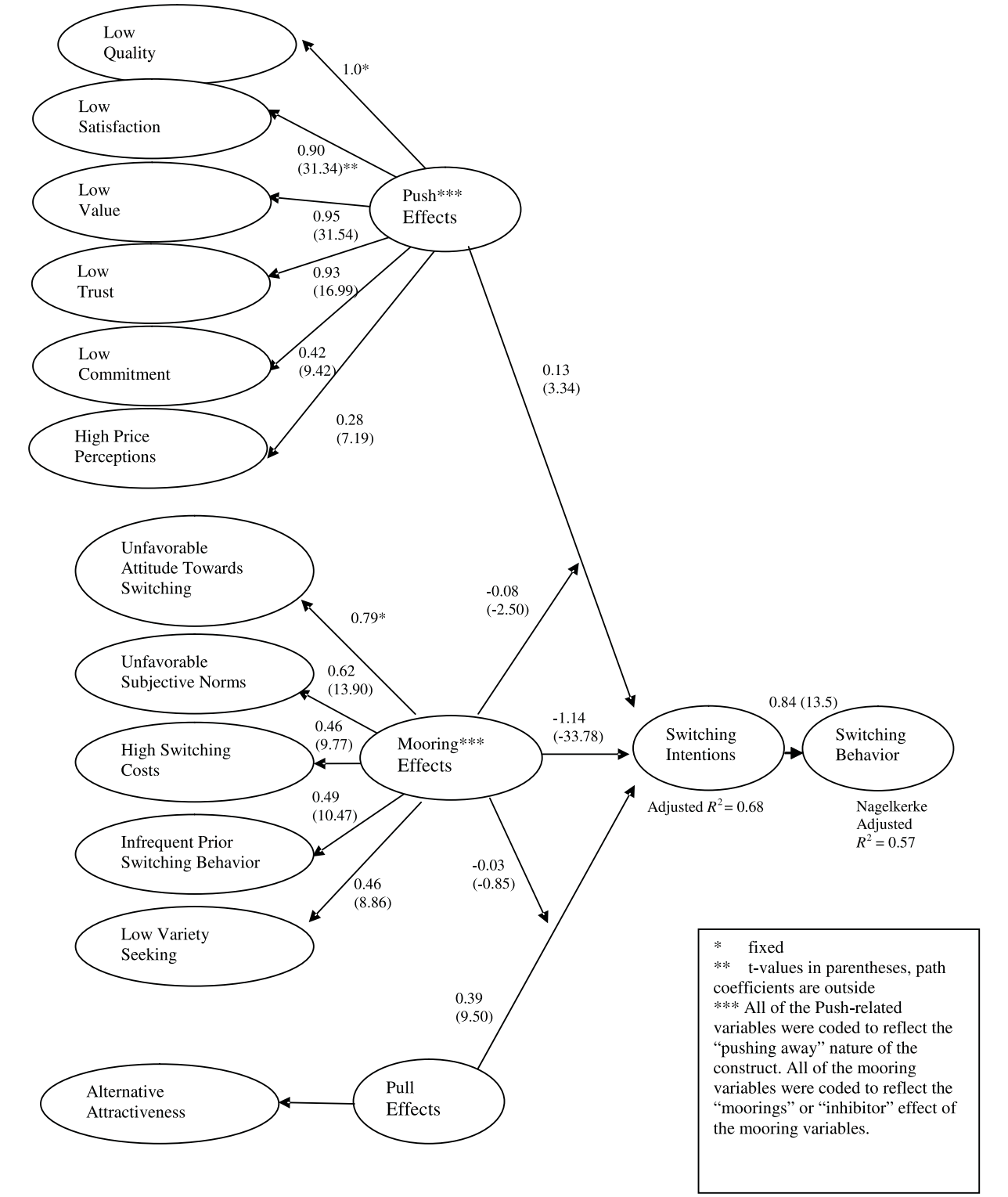
In sum, many of the evaluative variables studied as predictors of service provider switching correspond to push effects—expulsive forces at the origin that motivate service switching. Each of these variables, except high price perceptions, would have a negative relationship with switching intentions and behavior. When a consumer perceives low service quality and value, experiences low satisfaction with the service provider, has low trust and commitment to that service provider, and perceives the price to be high, he or she is more likely to feel pushed to switch. Put formally:

Hypothesis 1: The lower the perceived service quality, satisfaction, trust, and commitment to the service provider and the higher the perceived prices, the higher the likelihood consumers will intend to switch service providers.

Pull Effects

Pull factors are "positive factors drawing prospective migrants to the destination" (Moon 1995) and "attributes of distant places that make them appealing" (Dorigo and Tobler 1983). Similar to the push factors, these are place attributes, not characteristics associated with the migrant himself or herself. According to the push-pull paradigm, attractive factors at the destination pull the migrant to this destination. The only existing variable from the service-switching literature that conforms to this conceptualization is alternative attractiveness. Alternative attractiveness—the positive characteristics of competing service providers—positively influences consumers' intentions to switch (e.g., Jones et al. 2000). Thus,

FIGURE 1
The PPM Migration Model of Service Switching



NOTE: PPM = push-pull-mooring.

Hypothesis 2: The higher the alternative attractiveness of competing service providers, the higher the likelihood consumers will intend to switch service providers.

Mooring Effects

The simplicity of a push-pull model of migration does not capture the complexity of migration decisions. As Boyle et al. (1998) stated, "Any simple comparison between push and pull factors is complicated by the presence of intervening opportunities—obstacles such as family obligations at the origin or the high cost of moving, which may prevent migration occurring" (p. 64). Thus, even when push and pull factors are strong, an individual may not migrate. This is due to situational or contextual constraints (Lee 1966); these constraints are usually person-specific, but they can operate similarly for a large number of people (Gardner 1981). Variables from the service and brand switching literature that fit this conceptualization of mooring effects include switching costs, subjective norms (social influences), attitudes toward switching, past behaviors, and variety-seeking tendencies.

Constraints to migration include the time and moving costs associated with the move (Gardner 1981; Lee 1966). Traditionally, financial costs were the primary costs studied; however, other costs such as the emotional cost of leaving loved ones behind (e.g., Sell and De Jong 1978), time, effort, and ability have also been considered (De Jong and Gardner 1981). Service researchers study comparable variables: financial, time, effort, and ability switching costs have been shown to affect the switching decision (e.g., Bolton, Kannan, and Bramlett 2000; Jones et al. 2000).

It has also been argued that migrants' attitudes toward migration influence the migration decision (Desbarats 1983). According to this argument, a person holding a favorable attitude toward migrating will be more likely to migrate. Similarly, attitude toward switching has been associated with consumers' switching intentions (Bansal and Taylor 1999b, 2002).

Normative concerns also constrain or facilitate migration behaviors (Gardner 1981). Desbarats (1983) argued that "subjective norms" should be included in models of migration decisions; subjective norms refer to a person's perception of the social pressures placed on him or her to engage in a certain behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). Inclusion of normative concerns in service-switching research is limited. Recent research suggests that subjective norms influence consumers' attitude toward switching and their switching intentions (Bansal and Taylor 1999b). Likewise, broader cultural norms have been found to moderate the relationship between service quality and service switching (Liu, Furrer, and Sudharshan 2001).

Personal factors have also received attention as possible facilitators or inhibitors of migration (Gardner 1981; Lee 1966). From a list of personal factors studied in a service-switching context (e.g., Keaveney and Parthasarathy 2001), we draw on the constructs of past behavior and propensity for variety seeking as possible mooring variables. Individuals' preferences are in part influenced by their consumption history (Lattin and McAlister 1985) as well as their propensity for variety seeking (e.g., Lattin and McAlister 1985); although studied only in product contexts to date, these constructs would also be relevant in service settings. This relevance in a service setting parallels an interest in the migration literature. Jackson (1986) pointed out that while push and pull factors may appear to be the same for a group of people, migration decisions might differ due to a family's tradition of moving or staying. Although not explicitly called *variety seeking* in the migration literature, multiple moves and the composition of choice sets have received increased attention (Greenwood, Mueser, Plane, and Schlottmann 1991). Therefore, one could speculate that service provider switching intentions will be positively related to a consumer's past switching behavior and his or her propensity to seek variety in service experiences. This is consistent with recent research suggesting that consumers' past switching behaviors influence their subsequent behavioral intentions (Ganesh, Arnold, and Reynolds 2000).

Thus, the migration literature parallels much of the service-switching literature suggesting variables such as switching costs, subjective norms, attitudes toward switching, past behavior, and variety seeking as possible antecedent variables. According to the arguments above, we can hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3: The likelihood that consumers will intend to switch service providers is lower when switching costs are higher, consumers' propensity to seek variety is lower, consumers' attitudes and subjective norms toward switching are less favorable, and the consumer has not switched often in the past.

In sum, we propose that all the antecedent variables presented in Table 1 can be usefully conceptualized as push, pull, and mooring effects. Factors at the origin (low satisfaction, quality, value, trust, commitment, and high price perceptions) act to push the consumer away from the origin service provider, while factors at the destination (alternative attractiveness) act to pull the customer to the destination. Therefore, these variables correspond respectively to "push" and "pull" effects. In addition, there are a number of variables specific to the individual's situation (switching costs, subjective norms, attitudes toward switching, past experience, and variety-seeking tendencies) that act to inhibit or to facilitate switching; these variables can be represented as mooring effects.

The Moderating Role of Mooring Effects

The benefits of applying the PPM model to a service context go beyond its ability to structure a long list of predictor variables into theoretically defined effect categories. In migration research, the mooring variables moderate the relationships between the push and pull factors and the actual migration decisions (Lee 1966). By extension, it is thus expected that—even if push and pull factors are strong (e.g., low quality at the current service provider and attractive alternative service providers available)—a consumer may remain with the current service provider when mooring variables are strong (e.g., high costs of switching or significant others do not want him or her to switch). In addition to their direct effect on switching intentions (i.e., Hypothesis 3), mooring variables thus also moderate the relationship between push factors and switching intentions, and between pull factors and switching intentions. Although most prior service-switching studies have focused on direct effects, recent research suggests that moderators can play a role. For instance, moderators of the relationship between service satisfaction and repurchase intentions include variety-seeking (Homburg and Giering 2001) and switching barriers (Jones et al. 2000). Furthermore, cultural dimensions moderate the service quality—switching intention relationship (Liu et al. 2001). Extending this research by applying the PPM model in a service context, the following hypotheses are derived:

Hypothesis 4: Mooring variables moderate the relationship between push variables and intention to switch service providers. Specifically, the stronger the mooring variables, the weaker is the relationship between push variables and intentions to switch.

Hypothesis 5: Mooring variables moderate the relationship between pull variables and intention to switch service providers. Specifically, the stronger the mooring variables, the weaker is the relationship between pull variables and intentions to switch.

Integrating all the expected relationships discussed above results in the PPM migration model illustrated in Figure 1. Push, pull, and mooring variables all affect switching intentions and, indirectly, switching behavior. The intentions-behavior link is well established in marketing and psychology literatures; thus, a formal hypothesis is not presented here. Push and pull effects have a positive relationship with switching intentions—one is more likely to switch if pushed or pulled away. However, even with strong push and pull effects, a consumer may not switch. This is because there is a set of mooring effects that may constrain the switching decision, acting as a moderator of the push-pull relationship with switching intentions. Mooring effects also have a direct, negative relationship with switching intentions—the more a consumer feels "moored" to the service provider, the less likely he or she is to switch. Because it considers moderating relationships, the PPM migration model should explain switching intentions more accurately than a simple examination of the predictors' direct effects. In this study, the PPM is compared empirically to a direct-effects model where each independent variable is modeled as having a direct effect on switching intentions; this is done to illustrate the usefulness of the PPM model beyond its comprehensive nature alone.

METHOD

The hypotheses were examined with data on two services, collected via consumer surveys. The services chosen for the main study were auto repair and hair styling services; these services represent a "credence" and "experience" service, respectively (Iacobucci 1992). Prior to this empirical examination, however, pretests were conducted to validate our adaptations of existing scales.

Pretest Study

For the pretest, survey data were collected from a convenience sample of 191 undergraduate students enrolled in a marketing course at a medium-sized university. Measures were captured relative to three services: dry cleaning, hair styling, and long-distance telephone. The aim of this pretest was to examine the scales that would be used to test the PPM.

Measurement

Construct measurement used primarily existing scales, adapted for the service contexts examined. Recall that push effects are made up of perceptions of service quality, satisfaction, value, price, trust, and commitment. Service quality was measured with the 3-item scale used by Taylor and Baker (1994). Satisfaction was assessed with Oliver and Swan's (1989) scale. A 2-item scale was constructed to measure value; 1 item reflected the trade-off of all costs and benefits of obtaining the service (Patterson and Spreng 1997), and a 2nd item asked for an evaluation of overall service value (Gould-Williams 1999). To assess price perceptions, a 2-item scale was constructed that captured perceptions of the current service provider's price compared to competition. Trust was measured by adapting Larzelere and Huston's (1980) interorganizational scale, modified by Morgan and Hunt (1994). Finally, commitment was assessed with Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component scale of organizational commitment, adapted for the service contexts of the current study.

The pull construct is operationalized as alternative attractiveness, which was measured using Ping's (1993)

scale. Mooring effects consist of switching costs, attitude toward switching, subjective norms, past switching behavior, and variety-seeking tendencies. Scales for switching costs were based on Ping, attitude toward switching was based on Bansal and Taylor (1999b), and subjective norms were based on Taylor and Todd (1995); all of these scales were adapted to fit the empirical contexts of this study. Past behavior was assessed by adapting two items from East's (1993) study. To measure variety-seeking tendencies, the van Trijp, Hoyer, and Inman (1996) Acquisition of Products Scale was adapted for the current study. Finally, switching intentions were measured using Oliver and Swan's (1989) Scale of Behavioral Intention. All items were made up of 7-point scales.

Results from the pretest showed that the reliability of all scales was adequate given Nunnally's (1978) standard. Some questions, which appeared to be problematic based on the pretest respondents' comments, were reworded for the main study.

Main Study

A database of 6,700 proportionate randomly selected households from all Canadian provinces, except Quebec, was purchased from a reputable list broker for use in this study. Surveys measuring push, pull, and mooring variables, as well as switching intentions, were mailed to approximately 3,300 hairstyling and 3,300 automobile-repair customers selected randomly from this sampling frame. Prepaid reply mail envelopes were included with the surveys; a usable sample of 851 was obtained. Data on actual behavior, that is, whether the respondent actually switched service provider, were collected from respondents via telephone 2 months later. A final sample of 680 completed surveys (356 from auto-repair service consumers, and 324 from consumers of hairstyling services) was obtained. Missing data in these surveys, except for demographic variables, were replaced with the series mean (Donner 1982). More than 70 percent of the replacements involved missing data of less than 1 percent, with a maximum replacement of 2.9 percent for one variable.

Approximately 60 percent of respondents were male, and the majority of respondents were between the ages 29 and 55 (67%). High school graduates composed 23 percent of the sample, 30 percent of respondents had either a technical or a community college diploma, and 37 percent had an undergraduate or postgraduate university degree. Approximately 80 percent of the sample reported yearly household incomes greater than $40,000.

Coding

Data were coded to reflect the "valence" of the push, pull, and mooring constructs. Since the five variables thought to reflect the "push" construct were expected to result in stronger switching intentions, they were coded to represent negative factors at the origin that push people away. They should be interpreted as low quality, low satisfaction, low value, low trust, low commitment, and high prices. The mooring variables were coded to reflect their mooring or inhibitor effect; thus, higher scores for these variables should be interpreted as unfavorable attitude toward switching, unfavorable subjective norms toward switching, high switching costs, infrequent prior switching behavior, and low variety-seeking tendencies. The pull variable of alternative attractiveness was coded to reflect positive features at the destination.

RESULTS

Exploratory and confirmatory analyses were conducted. First, exploratory principal component analysis (varimax rotation) and reliability analyses were performed to refine the scales. For all constructs, a one-dimensional structure was found. One item belonging to the Switching Costs Scale and two items belonging to the Commitment Scale warranted exclusion as a result of the reliability analysis.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), using LISREL 8 with maximum-likelihood (ML) estimation (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1993), was then performed on the scales. To assess the model, multiple fit indexes are reported. Since chi-square may be an inappropriate measure to assess model fit with large sample sizes (Browne and Cudeck 1993; Marsh 1994), five additional, commonly used fit indexes are also reported: χ^2/df (Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin, and Summers 1977), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI; Jöreskog and Sörbom 1993), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Steiger 1990), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI; Bentler 1990). Standardized data were used for all subsequent analyses. The process of standardization "eliminates the bias introduced by the difference in the scales of the several attributes or variables used in the analysis" (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black 1995:435). Overall model fit indexes indicated that the CFA model was consistent with the data, with all fit indexes equal to, or better than, recommended values ($\chi^2 = 2905.87$, $p < .01$; df = 1,049, $\chi^2/df = 2.77$, GFI = .85, RMSEA = .052, NFI = .90, CFI = .94).

To assess the validity of the measures, factor loadings as well as the squared multiple correlations between the items and the constructs were scrutinized (Bollen 1989). A minimal level of .60 for factor loadings is considered acceptable to infer convergent validity (Bagozzi and Yi 1988). For the squared multiple correlations, item values above .40 are reflective of a substantial shared variance with their respective scales (Taylor and Todd 1995). All items, except for two items from the commitment scale,

were retained for subsequent analysis. The resultant measurement model exhibited a better fit (χ^2 = 2,429.54, p < .01; df = 956, χ^2/df = 2.54, GFI = .87, RMSEA = .048, NFI = .92, CFI = .95). Table 2 contains the final scale items and their reliabilities; all reliabilities exceed the accepted standards, except for the Price Perceptions Scale (Nunnally 1978).

Two structural models were assessed using a combination of LISREL, PRELIS, and Logistic Regression: the PPM migration model of service switching (Figure 1) and a comparison model in which all predictor variables from Table 1 were modeled as having direct, independent effects on switching intentions. A three-step process was followed to assess the PPM model. First, a second-order factor model was analyzed, with service quality, satisfaction, value, trust, commitment, and price perceptions reflective of the second-order factor labeled *push effects*, and attitudes toward switching, subjective norms, switching costs, past behavior, and variety-seeking behavior reflective of a second order construct labeled *mooring effects*. The *pull effects* construct was captured by the alternative attractiveness construct alone. Latent variable scores of push, pull, and mooring constructs, in addition to switching intentions, were used for analyses in the next step. Interactions between the mooring factors and the push and pull factors were calculated with the latent scores based on a methodology suggested by Jöreskog (2000). PRELIS was used to assess the structural model up to intentions. Then, the LOGISTIC REGRESSION procedure in SPSS was used to analyze the relationship between switching behavior and switching intentions. This is warranted since LISREL is incapable of analyzing data where the dependent variable is binary, as is the case with switching behavior. Overall fit, predictive power, and path significance were considered. Paths from each of the predictor constructs to intentions were compared to assess their relative influence (Schenker and Gentleman 2001).

Overall, the fit statistics of the LISREL analysis indicate that the PPM migration model provides a good fit to the data (χ^2 = 3,286.48, p < .01; df = 1,022, χ^2/df = 3.22, GFI = .83, RMSEA = .057, NFI = .90, CFI = .92). Linear and nonlinear effects collectively account for 68 percent of the variance in switching intentions. Furthermore, the logistic regression results suggest that switching intentions account for 57 percent of the variance in switching behavior.

As indicated in Figure 1, most path coefficients are as hypothesized. The paths from the push, pull, and mooring constructs to switching intentions are all significant, as is the path from switching intentions to switching behavior (p < .05). Tests comparing path coefficients (Schenker and Gentleman 2001) leading to intentions indicate that the path from moorings to intentions has the strongest effect, followed by the path from pull factors to intentions. Statistical support (p < .05) was also found for the interaction between push and mooring factors on switching intentions. However, a similar effect was not found for the interaction between pull and mooring factors. A visual representation of these interactive effects is shown in Figure 2. In summary, Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 were supported (p < .05), whereas Hypothesis 5 was not.

An independent, direct-effects model was also tested for comparison purposes. LISREL was used to assess the model up to intentions; logistic regression was used to assess the intentions-behavior link. Figure 3 shows the results of this model (χ^2 = 2,430.40, p < 0.01; df = 957, χ^2/df = 2.54, GFI = .87, RMSEA = .049, NFI = .92, CFI = .95). Sixty-one percent of the variance in switching intentions is accounted for. Hence, this model suffers a loss of 7 percent in the explained variance of switching intentions compared to the PPM model. In addition, several nonsignificant and counterintuitive results are obtained: only 7 of the 12 relationships are significant, and 2 are in a direction opposite to that hypothesized. Counterintuitively, according to the direct-effects model, the more satisfied a customer and the higher value he or she perceives, the more likely he or she is to switch. Also, variables shown to have a significant impact on switching in previous studies, such as switching costs (Bansal and Taylor 1999a, 1999b; Jones et al. 2000; Ping 1993; Sharma and Patterson 2000) do not have a significant effect in this study.

DISCUSSION

This study uses a model of migration to develop a unifying framework for understanding the factors that influence consumers' switching behaviors. This framework is tested with data from nearly 700 customers of auto repair and hair styling services. Results indicate that the PPM migration model fits the data well. Push, pull, and mooring factors all significantly influence switching intentions. In addition, all 12 variables associated with push, pull, or mooring effects are significant. The PPM migration model also performs better when compared with a model where all predictor variables are modeled as having independent direct effects on switching intentions.

Theoretical Implications

The PPM model provides theoretical justification for the inclusion of many previously examined switching predictors, including new ones. Furthermore, the PPM model recognizes the important moderating role of the mooring effects. These findings challenge some aspects of our current understanding of service provider switching and suggest three promising directions for future research.

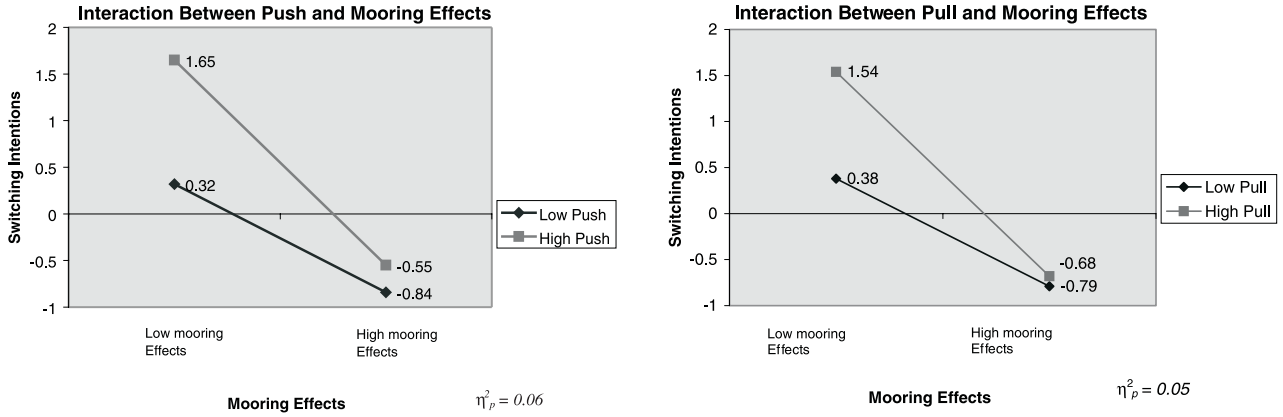
TABLE 2
Scale Items and Reliabilities[a]

Scale	*Reliability*	M	SD	*Corrected Item Total Correlation*	*Scale Items*
Quality	.8325	5.78	1.25	.73	Overall, I consider "my hair stylist's" service to be excellent (*SD* . . . SA)[b]
		6.09	1.37	.64	I believe that the general quality of "my hair stylist's" service is low (reverse coded; *SD* . . . SA)
					The quality of "my hair stylist's" service is generally
		5.87	1.18	.72	*Very poor . . . Excellent*
Satisfaction	.9672				Overall, how do you feel about the service provided to you by "my hair stylist"?
		6.00	1.18	.89	*Displeased . . . Pleased*
		5.97	1.17	.92	*Disgusted . . . Contented*
		5.97	1.24	.93	*Dissatisfied . . . Satisfied*
		6.05	1.18	.90	*They do a poor job . . . They do a good job*
		5.93	1.28	.89	*Unhappy . . . Happy*
Value	.8557	5.76	1.25	.75	Considering the trade-off between all of the costs and benefits of obtaining the service, the value of service provided by "my hair stylist" is excellent (*SD . . . SA*)
		5.60	1.37	.75	I feel that the services provided by "my hair stylist" are an extremely good value (*SD . . . SA*)
Trust	.9119	5.98	1.45	.56	I feel that "my hair stylist" does not show me enough consideration (reverse coded) (*SD . . . SA*)
		5.48	1.51	.79	I feel that I can trust "my hair stylist" completely (*SD . . . SA*)
		5.63	1.37	.81	"My hair stylist" is truly sincere in his/her promises (*SD . . . SA*)
		5.84	1.24	.83	"My hair stylist" is honest and truthful with me (*SD . . . SA*)
		5.90	1.23	.88	"My hair stylist" treats me fairly and justly (*SD . . . SA*)
		5.70	1.43	.71	I feel that "my hair stylist" can be counted on to help me, when I need it (*SD . . . SA*)
Commitment	.8180	2.94	2.06	.50	I do *not* feel emotionally attached to "my hair stylist" (reverse coded; *SD . . . SA*)
		3.71	2.16	.79	I do *not* feel like part of the family with "my hair stylist" (reverse coded; *SD . . . SA*)
		3.69	2.12	.76	I do *not* feel a strong sense of belonging to "my hair stylist" (reverse coded; *SD . . . SA*)
		3.36	2.01	.62	"My hair stylist" has a great deal of personal meaning for me (*SD . . . SA*)
Price perceptions	.6402	4.52	1.87	.48	I pay a better price for services at "my hair stylist" than I would at a competitors (*SD . . . SA*)
		4.23	1.86	.48	The cost of services at "my hair stylist" is lower than the competitor's (*SD . . . SA*)
Alternative attractiveness	.9226	2.32	1.40	.71	All in all, competitors would be much more fair than "my hair stylist" is (*SD . . . SA*)
		2.36	1.40	.77	Overall, competitors' policies would benefit me much more than "my hair stylist's" policies (*SD . . . SA*)
		2.25	1.39	.86	I would be much more satisfied with the service available from competitors than the service provided by "my hair stylist" (*SD . . . SA*)
		2.19	1.38	.87	In general, I would be much more satisfied with competitors than I am with "my hair stylist" (*SD . . . SA*)
		2.22	1.45	.80	Overall, competitors would be better to do business with than "my hair stylist" (*SD . . . SA*)
Attitude toward switching	.9523				For me, switching from "my hair stylist" to a new hair stylist within *the next 2 months* would be
		2.41	1.64	.83	*A bad idea . . . A good idea*
		2.65	1.61	.87	*Useless . . . Useful*
		3.09	1.50	.83	*Harmful . . . Beneficial*
		2.80	1.58	.87	*Foolish . . . Wise*
		2.89	1.52	.83	*Unpleasant . . . Pleasant*
		2.53	1.57	.88	*Undesirable . . . Desirable*

Subjective norms	.9127	3.59	2.13	.84	Most people who are important to me would approve of me switching from "my hair stylist" to a new hair stylist (*SD . . . SA*)
		3.70	2.12	.84	People I care about would approve of me switching from "my hair stylist" to a new hair stylist (*SD . . . SA*)
Switching costs	.9025	2.77	2.05	.64	On the whole, I would spend a lot of time and money to switch from "my hair stylist" (*SD . . . SA*)
		3.34	2.23	.79	Generally speaking, the costs in time, money, effort, and grief to switch from "my hair stylist" would be high (*SD . . . SA*)
		3.48	2.22	.83	Overall, I would spend a lot and lose a lot if I switched from "my hair stylist" (*SD . . . SA*)
		3.29	2.20	.80	Considering everything, the costs to stop doing business with "my hair stylist" and start up with a new hair stylist would be high (*SD . . . SA*)
Past behavior	.7500	3.38	2.21	.61	In the past, I have often switched hair stylists (*SD . . . SA*)
		3.23	1.95	.61	I have a lot of experience in switching hair stylists (*SD . . . SA*)
Variety seeking	.7243	2.62	1.66	.56	I would rather stick with a service provider that I usually go to than try someone I am not very sure of (reverse coded; *SD . . . SA*)
		2.29	1.51	.55	If I like a service provider, I rarely switch from it just to try someone different (reverse coded; *SD . . . SA*)
		2.95	1.70	.52	I am very cautious in trying out new and different service providers (reverse coded; *SD . . . SA*)
Switching intentions	.9342				Rate the probability that you would switch from "my hair stylist" to a new hair stylist within the next 2 months (Please answer all below)
		2.11	1.71	.87	*Unlikely . . . Likely*
		2.26	1.69	.90	*Improbable . . . Probable*
		2.63	1.59	.82	*No chance . . . Certain*
Switching behavior					Did you switch your hair stylist in the past 2 months?

a. Items for hair styling service are presented here; for the auto-repair service, simply replace "my hairstylist" with "my auto service company" in each item.
b. All scales were 7-point scales. *SD . . . SA* refers to the anchors of the scale being *strongly disagree/strongly agree*.

FIGURE 2
Plot of Interactive Effects



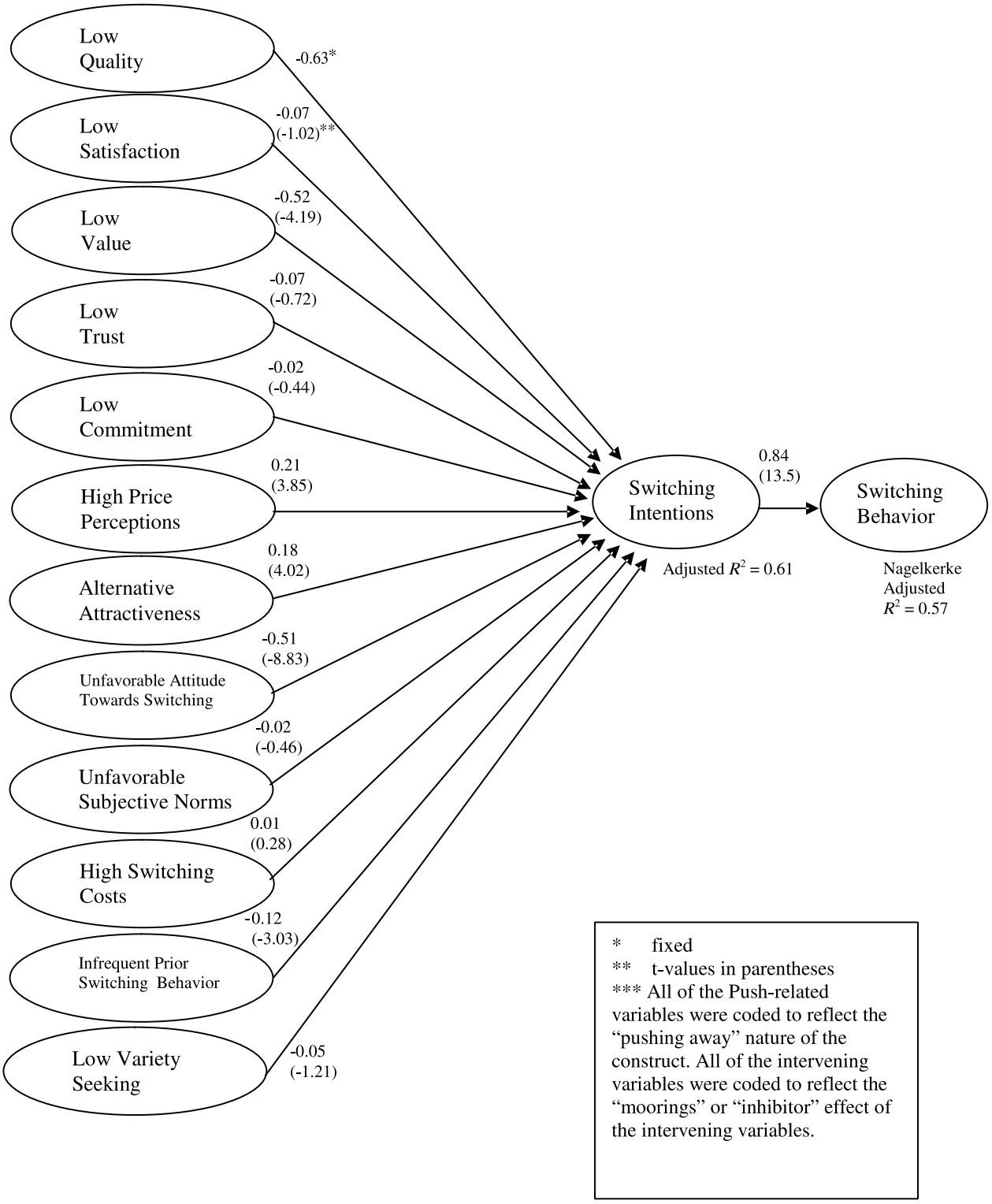
The Relative Influence of Service-Switching Predictor Variables

The comprehensive nature of the current examination allows for an assessment of the relative influence of the predictor variables. One of the most provoking results is that push effects, comprising some of the switching predictors that dominate extant switching models, is the weakest of these three drivers. Although low quality, low satisfaction, low trust, low commitment, and high prices do act to push a customer away, the personal inhibitors and facilitators (mooring effects) and the attractiveness of alternatives (pull effects) play more important roles in consumers' intentions to switch. To date, these variables have not received a great deal of attention in service-switching research; our results suggest that further research is needed to understand these variables. The PPM migration model offers direction to guide these investigations.

In our study, mooring effects are the strongest drivers of switching intentions; customers are more likely to switch if switching costs are low, significant others want them to switch, they have switched often in the past, they have a positive attitude toward switching, and they are high in variety-seeking tendencies. As Table 1 illustrates, of all the mooring variables, switching costs have received the most attention in prior marketing studies. However, our results suggest that other mooring variables—such as attitude toward switching, subjective norms, previous purchase behavior, and variety-seeking tendencies—all play important roles in consumers' switching intentions. To date, these variables have not received a great deal of attention in the service literature. For example, our study reveals the significant impact of subjective norms on intentions to switch, yet subjective norms have been virtually ignored in most service-switching models (for exceptions, see Bansal and Taylor 1999a, 1999b). Migration research recognizes the central role significant others play in decisions to migrate and in the choice of a destination (Tsuda 1999). If we apply lessons learned in the migration area, it suggests that the defection of a single customer can trigger the defection of many other customers through a "chain migration phenomenon" (Stimson and Minnery 1998). Marketers could also benefit from conducting longitudinal studies of "migration networks" as is done in the migration literature; this would allow for a better understanding of migration/switching patterns and would help to identify the migrants who have the most influence in driving defection.

Pull effects have the second strongest impact on switching intentions, exerting a much stronger influence on intentions than push effects do. This finding is congruent with research in migration, where there is evidence of contexts in which the decision-making process is dominated by the destination (Walmsley, Epps, and Duncan 1998). For instance, researchers observed that the choice of a destination sometimes precedes the decision to move; this occurs when a visit to the destination precipitates a reevaluation of conditions at the origin (Stimson and Minnery 1998). In our study, pull effects are operationalized in terms of a general measure of "alternative attractiveness" that includes items pertaining to anticipated satisfaction, value, and trustworthiness. While this operationalization is congruent with extant approaches in the service-switching literature (Bansal and Taylor 1999a; Jones et al. 2000; Sharma and Patterson 2000), our findings suggest that we would benefit from a greater understanding of the specific factors that attract or "pull" customers away from their current service provider. Efforts in that direction are emerging in the literature; for instance,

FIGURE 3
Comparison Model: Independent Direct Effects



Capraro, Broniarczyk, and Srivastava (2003) recently showed that the likelihood of consumer defection is directly influenced by consumers' level of knowledge about alternatives. The migration literature can also assist researchers in identifying additional "pull" forces. For example, researchers found that image and reputation were among the strongest factors underlying internal migration toward the coastal regions of Australia (Stimson and Minnery 1998; Walmsley et al. 1998). In fact, several respondents migrated to this location without a prior visit, reporting that its appeal lied mainly in its status as "a fashionable place to live" (Walmsley et al. 1998). Furthermore, novelty has been found to play a strong role in the migration decision as migrants are lured to a destination by novelty of the cultural, intellectual, or recreational environment it has to offer (Bogue 1969, 1977). The excitement of a novel destination, labeled the "bright lights" theory (Du Toit 1990), is akin to the concept of "driving markets" (Jaworski, Kohli, and Sahay 2000) where a firm shapes consumer behaviors by creating new customer preferences. The migration literature thus suggests that the role of image, reputation, and novelty deserve attention in our efforts to account for switching decisions that emphasize choice over constraint (Walmsley et al. 1998).

In sum, this empirical investigation of the PPM model suggests that our understanding of service switching would benefit from a greater focus on mooring and pull effects. The migration literature offers inspiration for identifying and developing such variables.

The Moderating Role of Mooring Effects

The PPM migration model provides a more complete understanding of switching intentions because it includes interactions between mooring effects and the push and pull effects. Results indicate a significant interaction between the push and mooring effects. As is illustrated in Figure 2, when the mooring effects are weak, customers will be more likely to switch when the push effects are strong than when they are weak. However, when the mooring effects are strong, there is virtually no difference in switching intentions between weak and strong push effects. Thus, a customer who feels "moored" to a service provider—due to such factors as high switching costs or unfavorable subjective norms—will stay with the current service provider even when low levels of quality or satisfaction are delivered. While the pull-mooring variables interaction is not significant, it is directionally consistent with the hypothesis proposing that when customers feel "moored" to the service provider, they are not likely to switch despite the presence of attractive alternatives. In evaluating the interactions, it is important to recognize that when main effects explain significant variance, as is the case here with mooring and pull effects, uncovering significant moderating effects is more difficult (McClelland and Judd 1993). Evans (1985) argued that moderator effects that account for even 1 percent of total variance may be considered substantively significant. Given this, even though the interaction effects in this study are small, their detection in this case suggests that they may be of sufficient theoretical and managerial interest. From a conceptual standpoint, it is also possible that other pull or mooring variables should be considered to capture the full impact of a pull-mooring variables' interaction. Additional pull variables were discussed above. One additional mooring variable may be the difficulty of returning to the origin after a switch. For consumers switching to an attractive hairstylist or auto-repair service, it is fairly easy to return to the original service provider in the event of a disappointing experience with the switched-to provider. Returning to a switched-from provider is more difficult in the context of other services, such as services involving contractual agreements. Our current understanding of switching costs is limited to those costs involved in switching from current to new service providers; future research should examine how costs associated with returning to the origin affect the decision to leave in the first place.

Nevertheless, it is important to understand that even if the push factors are strong, a customer may not switch if there are personal factors mooring him or her to the current service provider. These results further underscore the importance of understanding the mooring variables.

Furthering Our Understanding of Service Provider Switching Using Migration Models

While the goal of the present study is to integrate previously examined switching predictors into the PPM framework, the usefulness of the PPM model also lies in the opportunity it offers to reveal additional predictors of service switching. Potential pull effects suggested by the migration literature were discussed earlier. In addition, Bogue (1969) identified several push variables that may inspire new directions in our understanding of service switching: cultural alienation from a community; discriminatory treatment on the grounds of politics, religion or ethnicity; or retreat due to natural or humanly created catastrophe. Other possible push variables have been identified in the migration literature, including climate and congestion (Stimson and Minnery 1998) and ethnic composition (De Jong and Fawcett 1981). These variables suggest that marketers should also investigate such things as the influence of the cultural and social service environment on consumers' decisions to leave a service provider; this might be especially important for services where there is high customer-customer contact (Grove and Fisk 1997).

Additional mooring variables may also be derived from the migration literature. Note that the predominant "mooring" effects studied in service provider switching research

have been switching costs. The present research included less commonly studied mooring variables that played even stronger roles than switching costs did. This reinforces the argument that mooring variables deserve further exploration. The migration literature can offer some help in this regard. For example, DeJong and Fawcett (1981) suggested that micro-level factors are just as important as social, cultural, and physical constraints/facilitators to migration. Micro-level factors not only include demographic and situational variables but also "personality traits (e.g., risk taking or risk-aversion propensity, habits, locus of control) and individual ability to accomplish a desired action" (p. 83). Thus, marketers could benefit from exploring such factors as propensity for risk taking or self-efficacy as facilitators or inhibitors of the switching decision.

The correspondence between migration and service provider switching could potentially allow marketers to borrow more than just the PPM model from the migration literature. While the context of the present research is analogous to *national* migration, extending other migration contexts to a services context offers promise for even further understanding of service provider switching. For example, understanding the behaviors of customers who switch back to a prior service provider could be better understood by looking at the migration literature on *return migrants*, individuals who return and resettle in their original homeland (King 1986). In fact, this would contribute greatly toward understanding regain management (a specific area of customer management, distinct from retention management), which has been neglected so far (Stauss and Friege 1999). In addition, models of polygamous buying (Dowling and Uncles 1997) from the migration literature could contribute to marketing research on variety-seeking behaviors, by examining *nomadic behaviors* (Boyle et al. 1998), the behavior of people for whom migration is a way of life, and *multiple residences* (McHugh, Hogan, and Happel 1995).

The correspondence between switching and the migration goes beyond the contexts discussed above. There is a great deal of research in the migration literature examining the social and cultural effects of migration (Fielding 1992a, 1992b). As Jackson (1986) stated, "Migration is itself an act of change for the migrant as well as each of the societies between which he moves" (p. 40). Migration researchers examine the changes in both the origin and destination societies as a result of migration. Although marketers have focused their attention on "why customers switch," very little effort has been directed at understanding how migration from one provider to another affects the origin or destination firm, except financially. Clearly, this is relevant for service firms where customer participation (Rodie and Kleine 2000) or customer-to-customer interaction (Grove and Fisk 1997) is prevalent. As Fielding (1992a) noted, migration can lead to cultural conflict; in a service context, the potential for conflict also exists when, for instance, a dissimilar segment of customers switches to a service provider. The impact of migration on the origins' and destinations' culture requires examination.

Managerial Implications

An understanding of the relative impact of, and interactions among, push, pull, and mooring effects affords marketers the opportunity to design more effective customer acquisition and/or retention programs. In particular, the recognition that mooring effects influence switching intentions directly and through an interaction with push effects is significant. Customer retention programs typically revolve around push variables (e.g., relationship strategies emphasizing satisfaction and commitment), and acquisition efforts typically entail creating an attractive alternative (i.e., pull effects); our results, however, suggest that these strategies may be hindered by unfavorable mooring effects. Service providers would thus benefit from fully understanding the mooring variables and striving to have them work to their advantage: current service providers should attempt to strengthen the moorings, and competitors trying to encourage switching should strive to weaken moorings.

Service providers can influence different mooring variables to various degrees: they may have more direct control over switching costs (Burnham, Frels, and Mahajan 2003), but they might be able to exert some influence over other mooring variables through indirect means. For example, promotional plans may be targeted at the customer's family or social circle (targeting subjective norm), thus encouraging the development of brand communities that reinforce the social basis of customers' attachment to the brand (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002). Competitors may use a similar strategy to attract consumers away from their current service provider by stimulating the emergence of a "culture of migration" (Tsuda 1999) within groups of consumers. Alternatively, since a higher frequency of prior purchases with one service provider acts as a barrier to switching, service providers could erect a switching barrier by developing a history of repeat purchase through such means as sales promotions or loyalty programs. This is analogous to Berry and Parasuraman's (1991) "level 1 relationship marketing," using frequency tactics to keep customers coming back. The results here suggest that by establishing a "habit" of purchasing behavior, one can develop a mooring to the current service provider.

Our results underscore the importance of alternative attractiveness in consumers' decisions to switch. Consumers may be lured to a more attractive destination even in the absence of factors at the origin acting to push them away. For destination firms, the migration literature offers suggestions to leverage these forces. As discussed earlier, the

novelty associated with a destination firm (the "bright lights" theory; Du Toit 1990) can lure customers to the destination. The initial arrival of Starbucks and Home Depot into the market, with their unique positioning on innovative attributes, illustrates this approach. A second possible strategy for destination firms is to capitalize on tourism. Encouraging consumers to experience the destination firm for even a short period of time (holiday) may prompt a reevaluation of the origin and precipitate the switching decision. When sampling is not feasible, communication campaigns depicting the service experience may achieve similar objectives. For firms at the origin, the role of pull forces on consumers' switching decisions suggests that effective retention strategies should minimize customers' opportunities to develop strong perceptions of competitors' offers. For instance, accommodating short-notice appointments may be worthwhile for service providers—such as hair stylists and auto repair services—in order to avoid that a customer's trial visit to a competitor triggers a reevaluation of the current provider and a subsequent switch.

Limitations

There are some important limitations associated with this study. We recognize that the survey setting provided some constraints. One of the benefits of the PPM migration model was the inclusion of interactive effects; however, the use of a survey limited the ability to detect interactions (McClelland and Judd 1993). Another limitation of surveys is the response rate. The 10 percent response rate in this study is characteristic of mail surveys. However, given that the objective in the present research is the generalizability of the model, not the data (Lynch, Calder, Phillips, and Tybout 1982), and that response rates problems would not affect the PPM and comparison models differently, concerns about nonresponse bias are less problematic.

In the present study, only the most commonly studied drivers of service switching were incorporated into the PPM model. This research examined whether the PPM was an appropriate unifying framework for existing service-switching drivers; as such, dimensions and measures of the push, pull, and mooring constructs were not derived strictly from the conceptual definitions of these constructs. For example, in this research, the pull factor was captured via a single, overarching construct of alternative attractiveness. As discussed previously, efforts should be made in future research to incorporate additional dimensions underlying each of the push, pull, and mooring constructs. Last, the proposed models are examined within a limited setting of only two services. As a result, the generalizability of the findings from the current study could be improved by empirical examinations in other settings of service switching. Different frameworks for classifying services could be used as a basis for assessing the robustness of the results of the PPM model across various service settings. It is possible that service type could moderate the relationships in the PPM model. For example, Zinkhan and Wallendorf (1985) found that the relative effects of variables such as income and education (possible mooring variables according to our model) on satisfaction differed depending on the type of service. In our study, the results did not change when the two services were examined separately, despite one being an "experience" good directed at the person (hair styling) and the other being a "credence" good directed at a thing (auto repair; Iacobucci 1992; Lovelock 1983). However, neither service involved high degrees of customer-to-customer contact (Grove and Fisk 1997); the migration literature would suggest that in cases of high social contact, moorings would play a more influential role in switching decisions. Interestingly, moorings played the strongest role in our results, suggesting that the choice of these two service contexts represents a conservative test of this relationship.

Conclusion

The PPM model provides a useful tool to assist managers in mapping the competing forces that influence the movement of their customer base—factors that act to push customers away, pull customers to competitors, and facilitate or inhibit switching. The variables examined in this study provide a starting point. More important, this study suggests that service switching is influenced less by customer evaluations of service provider characteristics and service experience (push variables) than by alternative attractiveness (pull variables) as well as personal and social factors (mooring variables). As discussed here, the migration literature has much to offer to those interested in understanding customer switching behavior. We hope this study will evoke further interest in the area.

NOTE

1. This dichotomy of voluntary/refugee is an oversimplification of a more complex distinction between various types of migrants. Richmond (1988) argued that refugees and voluntary migrants may actually be considered two extremes on a continuum based on voluntariness.

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