

THE ROLE OF PLACE ATTACHMENT IN OFFLINE AND ONLINE RETAIL STORES

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ABSTRACT

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>As the online environment in the retail context has substantially grown managers are keen on finding new ways to commit customers to their stores. Place attachment has begun to emerge in the marketing literature as a possibility to hold on to and cherish customers. The role of place attachment in commercial settings is still a bit vague. Researchers and managers have yet to discover the effects that place attachment could have on consumers' behavioral outcomes.</p> <p>Thus, the purpose of this study is to elaborate the term place attachment in the retail context and investigate the effect it has on the switching intentions of consumers. This study was executed in both the offline and the online shopping environments. Place attachment consists of three dimensions which are place identity, place dependence and social bonds. This study examines the effects of these three dimensions on the switching intentions of consumers. These relationships are further investigated through moderating effects of the shopping environment, and thus the offline and online contexts are compared with each other.</p> <p>The study was conducted with four multi-channel retail stores, of which three are Finnish and one is Swedish. Quantitative approach was selected for this study. The data (N=1169) was gathered through a marketing company's panel, and the analyses were carried out using SPSS Statistics and AMOS for structural equation modelling. Based on the results of this study, place dependence was the only dimension to have a significant, negative effect on the switching intentions of consumers. Place identity had a minor effect on the outcome, and social bonds had no effect at all. When comparing the shopping environments place dependence had a significant difference between them. In the offline environment, place dependence had a significant, negative effect on the switching intentions of consumers but in the online environment, no effect was found. Place identity and social bonds did not differ between the two environments.</p>	
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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Verkkokauppojen jatkaessa kasvuaan yritysten johtajista on tullut halukkaita löytämään uusia keinoja asiakkaidensa sitouttamiseksi. Markkinoinnin kirjallisuudessa on nousemassa esille uusi ilmiö ”paikkaan sitoutuminen”, joka tarjoaisi mahdollisuuden asiakkaiden vaalimiseen. Kaupallisessa ympäristössä paikkaan sitoutumisen rooli on vielä hieman epäselvä. Tutkijat ja yritysten johtajat eivät ole vielä selvittäneet, minkälaisia vaikutuksia paikkaan sitoutumisella voisi olla kuluttajien käyttäytymiseen.</p> <p>Näin ollen tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on täsmentää paikkaan sitoutumista terminä vähittäiskaupan alalla ja tutkia sen vaikutuksia kuluttajien aikomuksiin vaihtaa toiselle palveluntarjoajalle. Tämä tutkimus toteutettiin sekä offline että online ostoympäristöissä. Paikkaan sitoutuminen koostuu kolmesta eri ulottuvuudesta, jotka ovat paikan identiteetti, riippuvuus paikasta ja sosiaaliset suhteet paikassa. Tämä tutkimus tarkastelee näiden kolmen ulottuvuuden vaikutuksia kuluttajien aikomuksiin vaihtaa toiselle palveluntarjoajalle. Näitä vaikutuksia tutkitaan myös tarkemmin moderaatioanalyysin avulla, jossa vertaillaan offline ja online ostoympäristöjä.</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa oli mukana neljä monikanavaista vähittäisalan kauppaa, joista kolme ovat suomalaisia ja yksi on ruotsalainen. Tutkimus toteutettiin kvantitatiivisena. Aineistonkeruun ($n=1169$) toteutti ulkopuolinen markkinointiyritys, ja analyysien tekemisessä sekä rakenneyhtälömallin muodostamisessa hyödynnettiin SPSS- ja AMOS-ohjelmistoja. Tuloksien mukaan riippuvuus paikasta oli ainoa ulottuvuus, jolla oli tilastollisesti merkitsevä, negatiivinen vaikutus kuluttajien aikomuksiin vaihtaa toiselle palveluntarjoajalle. Paikan identiteetillä oli vain vähäinen vaikutus kuluttajien käyttäytymiseen, ja sosiaalisilla suhteilla ei ollut minkäänlaista vaikutusta. Vertailtaessa ostoympäristöjä riippuvuus paikasta ilmeni merkitsevästi eroavaisuutena niiden välillä. Offline ympäristössä paikasta riippuvuudella oli merkitsevä, negatiivinen vaikutus kuluttajien aikomuksiin vaihtaa toiselle palveluntarjoajalle mutta online ympäristössä sillä ei ollut vaikutusta. Paikan identiteetti ja sosiaaliset suhteet eivät eronneet ostoympäristöjen välillä.</p>	
Asiasanat Paikkaan sitoutuminen, paikan identiteetti, riippuvuus paikasta, sosiaaliset suhteet, ostoympäristö, vähittäiskauppa, online, offline, kuluttajakäyttäytyminen	
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

Finnish consumers spent around 2,8 billion euros on online goods in 2017, and in 2018 the number rose to 4,4 billion euros. The turnover of the whole online store in Finland from 2017 to 2018 grew 18 percentage. (Paytrail, The Finnish online store 2018.) These numbers with their rapid growths should draw the attention of all current and future online retailers. While many brick-and-mortar stores have put their effort on enhancing functional performance to create and maintain loyalty, dominant changes in the retail environment require more than functional performance by retailers (Johnson, Kim, Mun & Lee 2015). The switching costs in the online environment are piercingly low and therefore it is an absolute challenge for retailers to maintain and create customer loyalty (Kwon & Lennon 2009). Given the shift and change in the retail environment, it seems compelling for offline retailers to come up with new customer relationship strategies that motivate patronage intentions (Badrinarayanan & Becerra 2019). Nevertheless, it is crucial to understand that offline stores are not disappearing completely. For example, Amazon, which has operated strictly in the online environment, has opened an offline store to increase their customer engagement and experiential value (Badrinarayanan & Becerra 2019). The days of brick-and-mortar stores are not yet counted but the rapid changes require action. One aspect of looking at this problem, and in the best scenario even solving it, could be utilizing a psychologically originated term "place attachment". This term refers to an emotional bonding to a place that decreases the perceived substitutability of other places (Milligan 1998). Social sciences have bluntly ignored the effect of place attachment on commercial places, despite the growing broader interest for the issue (Lewicka 2011).

Place attachment has been studied in many contexts, such as psychology, geography and sociology but the commercial organizations and therefore the retail environment seems to lack research on the subject (Brocato, Baker & Voorhees 2015; Debenedetti, Oppewal & Arsel 2014; Lewicka 2011). This may be because commercial settings are considered too dull to rouse attachment (Debenedetti et al. 2014). In her broad literature review about place attachment, Lewicka (2011) even questions place attachment and if non-places¹ are able to trigger attachment. She continues with her pondering whether place attachment is capable of changing whilst the place requires transformation (Lewicka 2011). This thought can be reflected to the shift in the retail environment: can place attachment be found in the online context as well?

The ultimate goal of place attachment is to enhance customer loyalty and commit the customers to the retailer (Park, MacInnis & Priester 2006). According

¹ For example, shopping malls

to Johnson et al. (2015), consumers are attached to brick-and-mortar stores when three issues are fulfilled; firstly, consumers have had a positive experience earlier in that store (place identity). Secondly, the retailer offers the consumers desired products (place dependence). Thirdly, the retailer has created an environment where consumers are able to interact with others (social bonds). (Johnson et al. 2015.) These three dimensions form place attachment and with the above statements in mind, it would seem rational that place attachment could also be formed in the online environment. Brocato et al. (2015) have proved the existence of place attachment in a service context and Johnson et al. (2015) in brick-and-mortar stores but the research including place attachment in the online environment, at least to my current knowledge, is close to none. Then again, the results that place attachment has to offer speak for themselves. Studies have shown that even separately all three dimensions can have a significant effect on a behavioral outcome (e.g. Brocato 2006; Johnstone & Conroy 2008; Lee, Kyle & Scott 2012). For future research Johnson et al. (2015) recommended expanding place attachment into versatile retail contexts. Brocato et al. (2015) proposed future research to include place attachment as an important aspect of customer commitment in the service industry. In addition, Jorgensen and Stedmann (2001) have suggested future research to study how behavioral outcomes are associated with the place.

With the irreversible changes happening in the retail environment, it seems crucial to find out different ways to commit consumers to the same retailer. Creating place attachment could be one way of solving the upcoming difficulties that retailers face with digitalization and the ease of switching between channels and suppliers. This study investigates the role of place attachment in both offline and online retail environments and pursues to find out whether this psychological term could be the key to customer loyalty and success.

1.2 Research problem and study objectives

Scholars have recognized the need for thorough place attachment research in commercial settings. This study will keep in mind the importance of customer loyalty to retailers and find a possible solution to retain customers. The aim of this study is to deepen the understanding of the role that place attachment plays in the retail context. Furthermore, the aim is to find out whether place attachment can have an effect on the switching intentions of consumers in the retail environment. This will be investigated through the three dimensions of place attachment; place identity, place dependence and social bonds.

Badrinarayanan and Becerra (2019) proposed a future research topic in their study in which place attachment in brick-and-mortar stores would be compared with place attachment in their online counterparts. Debenedetti et al. (2014) also pointed out that future research should find out whether place attachment might occur without a social context and whether it requires

temporal and spatial constructs. With the above propositions, it would be interesting to investigate the online retail environment where interaction, physicality and time do not play such a major role than in the offline environment. As the retail environment should be considered as a two-way street with the offline and the online environments, in this thesis both contexts will be looked at. The second aim for this study is to find out if there are differences in place attachment between these environments. The differences will be investigated through moderating effects of the three dimensions of place attachment in both shopping environments.

Applying above, the research questions can be specified as:

- How do the three dimensions of place attachment influence the switching intentions of consumers?
- How do the three dimensions of place attachment differ in offline and online shopping environments?

1.3 Research structure

This thesis consists of five chapters. To begin with, the introduction chapter briefly discusses about the background of the research, the objectives of the study and the research problems, as well as the structure of the research. The background of this study comes from psychology from where the term place attachment has originated. Place attachment has been found to be a relevant issue in the marketing literature as well and could be able to give a new aspect on how retailers could adjust to the shift in digitalization. Next the study will continue with the second chapter, which reviews the relevant literature about place attachment and the transformation from the offline environment to the online environment in the retail context. The second chapter will take a closer look on place attachment in other study fields as well as in marketing, and the three dimensions it consists of. Later in the second chapter, the earlier studies on place attachment's effects on different behavioral outcomes and the shift from offline to online will be looked at. In the end of the second chapter, the proposed research model is presented.

The third chapter elaborates on the methodology of the research. A quantitative approach has been selected for this study and the data was gathered with an online survey. The fourth chapter presents the results from the analyses. Basic descriptive statistics are given, and mean comparisons were measured with t-test and variance analysis. A structural model was conducted with proper validity measures. In addition, the moderating effects were measured. Finally, the fifth chapter consists of conclusions, discussion over the results as well as the evaluation of the research. The contributions are not as well in line with previous

literature, but it should be kept in mind that the context was also quite different from earlier studies. Managerial implications are first presented on a more general level and then the focus is on the four stores that were precisely studied in this thesis.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Place attachment

In the following section, the concept of place attachment will be defined. The term has been given many definitions and used in various study fields: the background for place attachment roots from human-environment relations, such as geography, environmental psychology and sociology (e.g. Low & Altman 1992; Milligan 1998; Relph 1976). Most studies acknowledge Low's and Altman's (1992) implications to be the origin for place attachment as they combine their thoughts from psychology to geography. In their definition, place attachment is described as a positive bond that is developed between groups or individuals and their environment. 'Attachment' is connected to psychology referring to affection and 'place' emphasizes the environmental settings to which people become emotionally attached. (Low & Altman 1992, 5-6.) According to Milligan (1998) place attachment is the bond formed by an individual to a physical setting that has been given meaning through interaction. These physical settings are both physically and socially constructed (Milligan 1998). Place attachment isn't merely acknowledged as people's emotional ties to a spatial setting, but it also refers to the social ties that connect individuals to specific places or scenes. (Low & Altman 1992, 7.) The value which individuals attach to a specific object or place, cannot be explained just with the place's functional properties (Williams & Roggenbuck 1989), but rather place attachment explicitly requires emotional content (Jorgensen & Stedman 2001).

It is not surprising that environmental psychologists have done the most detailed research on the concept of place attachment as its heritage is strongly connected to John Bowlby's attachment theory (Milligan 1998). Environmental psychologists as well as geographers have explored people's attachments to their homes, communities and societies (Lee et al. 2012). Nowadays, the research has gone from Bowlby's attachment theory to include consumer behaviour, neighbouring, marketing (Brocato 2006; Brocato et al. 2015; Debenedetti et al. 2014; Hidalgo & Hernandez 2001), recreational settings (Kyle, Graefe & Bacon 2004; Lee & Shen 2013), tourism (Alexandris, Kouthouris & Meligdis 2006; Yuksel, Yuksel & Bilim 2010) and leisure literature (Williams & Roggenbuck 1989; Williams & Vaske 2003).

The more up-to-date definitions for place attachment have quite a similar tone to them. According to Kyle, Graefe and Manning (2005) physical settings become the object of attachment through interactions with the physical environment. Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) continue that place attachment contains the feeling of connection to the physical settings, and Brocato (2006) states that it is the process by which people create emotional bonds to places. Clearly, the definitions in previous literature emphasize the affective and

physical components of place attachment (Brocato 2006). Then again, Milligan (1998) has written that on the one hand place attachment does depend on the specific physical characteristics of a setting, and on the other hand it does not depend on them. Some scholars believe that the experiences created in a place cannot entirely define the place and others believe that the interaction and experiences gained in the place give its meaning to it (Milligan 1998). Manzo (2005) supports the latter aspect and indicates that it is not explicitly the places themselves that are notable, but rather the experience in the place is what creates the meaning. These experiences may as well be negative provided that they evoke powerful emotions contributing to attachment (Manzo 2005; Milligan 1998). This contradicts with the thoughts of Lee & Shen (2013) who state that place attachment represents solely the positive bond that an individual has with a place. In Table 1 below, the different field of studies and their definitions for place attachment are presented, as well as a well-fitting open question answer that was inquired in this study's survey. In the question, the respondent was asked to explain about his/her latest shopping experience. Different aspects of place attachment can be observed from the answer, and especially the comprehensive experience that the respondent has gained from the visit to the store can be grasped from it.

Table 1: Place attachment definitions

Study	Field of study	Definition
Low and Altman 1992	Environmental psychology	<u>A positive bond</u> developed between groups or individuals and their environment
Williams and Roggenbuck 1989	Leisure literature	<u>The value</u> which individuals attach to a specific object or place
Milligan 1998	Sociology	The bond formed by an individual to a physical setting that has been given <u>meaning through interaction</u>
Hidalgo and Hernandez 2001	Neighbourhood	Feeling of <u>connection</u> to the physical settings
Kyle et al. 2005	Recreational settings	The physical settings become the object of attachment through <u>interactions</u> with the physical environment.
Brocato 2006	Service literature	The process by which people create <u>emotional bonds</u> to places
Yuksel et al. 2010	Tourism literature	The sense of physically being and feeling ' <u>in place</u> ' or ' <u>at home</u> ' can be considered as a sign that an individual has created an emotional tie to a place.
An answer from the open question in this study	Consumer behaviour	"Spacious, beautiful and an <u>inspiring place</u> . It is wonderful that you are <u>allowed to drink a free coffee</u> from the machine in the store. Most of the staff is very friendly and <u>eager to serve</u> . I visit the store <u>with a few friends at least once a month</u> to see what new or discounted products are for sale. It is lovely to sip a hot cappuccino and browse all the beautiful tableware; <u>nearly every time I grab something from the store to buy.</u> "

The term place attachment has been defined quite a few times, and these definitions offer both similarities and differences. Scannell and Gifford (2010)

have given a coherent alternative to the related concepts that have previously remained a bit fragmented in the literature. Their framework proposes place attachment as a multidimensional concept that consists of person, psychological process and place dimensions. These dimensions cover the aspects of psychology, environmental settings, identity and social interaction. (Scannell & Gifford 2010.) Then again, in the leisure literature place attachment has been conceptualized as a multidimensional concept consisting of place identity and place dependence (e.g. Williams & Roggenbuck 1989; Williams & Vaske 2003). These dimensions have been found to be reliable across multiple samples as well as outdoor recreation contexts (Lee et al. 2012). Nevertheless, as previously mentioned the social aspect of place attachment should not be forgotten (Low & Altman 1992; Milligan 1998), even though Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) pointed out that individuals create preferences for places even without the social interaction. Lewicka (2011) states that in residence literature the most consistent predictor of attachment to places are actually the social factors and sometimes the physical variables explain a higher percent of variance of attachment. Then again, literature has proved that place identity and place dependence are the most widely studied dimensions for place attachment (Brocato 2006). However, support has also been found for the social and affective components of place attachment in other contexts (Jorgensen & Stedman 2001; Kyle et al. 2005).

As literature shows there have been some differences which dimensions compose place attachment, and which place-related concepts should be combined. According to Lewicka (2011) studies on people-place relationships seem to have a problem fitting together various place-related concepts, such as place attachment, place identity, rootedness, sense of place, place dependence or place satisfaction. For example, Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) have put forth that place identity, place dependence and place attachment represent the more general concept of "sense of place". Moore and Graefe (1994) have compared the same dimensions with attitude theory: place attachment can be considered as affective attitude, place identity as cognitive attitude and place dependence as conative attitude. This comparison can also be found from the framework done by Scannell and Gifford (2010). According to Lee et al.'s (2012) study a multidimensional setting, where the three dimensions (place identity, place dependence and social bonding) are used, is recommended. Brocato et al. (2015, study 1) agree on with this statement whilst their results show that these three dimensions successfully predict place attachment. Even though past research has provided better insight to the foundation of place attachment with multidimensional conceptualizations, the three dimensions may be too easily tied together and can therefore cause false results (Lee et al. 2012). This has to be reckoned later on in the analysis section, even though, as upcoming theory will prove, place identity, place dependence and social bonds are quite different from each other.

The majority of place attachment studies suggest that the social and physical dimensions are worth distinguishing and that their roles may be separate from each other in attachment processes (Lewicka 2011). In this master's

thesis I will be using the three dimensions, place identity, place dependence and social bonds that Brocato et al. (2015, study 1) has put forth as they encourage a sense of place which advocates the formation of place attachment. Their foundation dates back to environmental psychology (Brocato et al. 2015, study 1). In the upcoming sections these dimensions will be looked at more closely with the support from literature.

2.1.1 Place identity

The first dimension to be presented is place identity, in which the origin goes even deeper to the past than with place attachment. With geographers' studies, place identity has been researched already in the 1970's and 80's with definitions that are still widely applied. Relph (1976, 45) studied places and he explained place identity as an on-going indistinguishability and unity which makes it possible for that place to differ from other places. Seamon and Sowers (2008) have studied the crucial points of Relph's (1976) thoughts and they describe place identity in terms of three aspects:

1. The physical settings of the place
2. The activities, situations and events in the place and
3. The meanings which are created, either individually or in a group, through people's experiences and intentions regarding the place.

Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff (1983), known names in the early days of environmental psychology, had similar thoughts with Seamon and Sowers (2008) even though the field of study was different. According to them, the experiences and relationships in a personal or physical setting have a great influence on place identity and they are based on a variety of physical contexts. These experiences and relationships in regard with the place define people's daily existence (Proshansky et al. 1983). With these definitions it can already be acknowledged, that place identity is not a simple term to determine, and that the experiences, relationships and physical settings of a place are necessary when place identity is being formed.

To get a good understanding of the term, it is required to look at it more closely from a psychological perspective. Place identity is stated to be a sub-structure of a person's self-identity. Self-identity consists of different cognitions, for example memories, feelings and attitudes, which are then related to the variety of physical settings. (Proshansky et al. 1983.) Naturally, not all places can have a strong bond with a person's self-identity. However, individuals frequently identify with places which reflect their own identities. (Kyle, Mowen & Tarrant 2004.) Proshansky (1978, 155) in Kyle et al. (2005) has outlined that place identity consists of the cognitive connections between the individual's self and the physical settings. The settings provide individuals the possibility to express and support their identity (Kyle et al. 2005). Conflicting, an individual's

identity can also be formed while feeling non-belonginess to a place (Johnstone 2012). Raymond, Brown and Weber (2010) conclude that place identity consists of dimensions of ourselves that define who we are, such as the feelings about certain physical settings and the symbolic connections we have to places (Proshansky 1983; Williams, Patterson & Roggenbuck 1992; Williams & Vaske 2003).

Broadening the view from self-identity to physical retail places Brocato et al. (2015, study 1) found that it is possible for individuals to rely on specific locations to affirm their social identities, thus establishing a sense of place identity. A coffee shop study done by Milligan (1998) showed that the employees who had worked at the coffee shop's old site referred to themselves as the "old" employees, whereas the employees who hadn't worked at the old site were the "new" employees. The old employees used this differentiation to create a new aspect of identity for themselves. One of the reasons why individuals, or the just mentioned coffee shop employees, appoint importance to places, is that these places help to identify themselves to others (Williams & Roggenbuck 1989). In recreational settings, a place can be appreciated because of the possibility to conduct a specific activity, or because of the emotional or symbolic connections that the place might create (Moore & Graefe 1994). The emotional and symbolic meanings play an important part when an individual becomes attached to a certain place because of what the place represents (Williams & Roggenbuck 1989). According to Williams' and Vaske's (2003) study place identity can be considered as emotional attachment whereas place dependence, which will be introduced in the next section, can be considered as functional attachment.

2.1.2 Place dependence

The second dimension of place attachment is called place dependence, and even though it is not as widely researched as place identity, there is a variety of studies to look into. Quite often these two dimensions go hand-in-hand, meaning that they can be found from the same studies (e.g. Brocato et al. 2015; Jorgensen & Stedman 2001; Kyle et al. 2005; Raymond, Brown & Weber 2010; Williams & Vaske 2003). Frankly, there seems to be no study that would focus solely on place dependence, but the definitions given, provide an all-inclusive understanding. Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) define place dependence as how a specific physical setting stands out from other settings with the variety of alternatives at hand. Milligan (1998) states the same in her study by saying that place dependence refers to the emotional bonding to a physical setting in which the alternative physical settings become less desirable. The process of place dependence requires comparison between different options (Jorgensen & Stedman 2001) and if there are many substitutes available for the place, the degree of place attachment will decrease (Williams et al. 1992). Brocato (2006) determines place dependence as:

1. The quality of the specific place
2. The quality of relative alternatives.

Place dependence has been found to be related to the frequency of use (Moore & Graefe 1994). According to Williams and Vaske (2003) the more frequent visitation to a physical setting the more place dependence will increase. Kyle's et al.'s (2004) results showed that as the respondent's taste for hiking increased, their use (for example frequency) of a specific hiking trail increased as well. This results as place dependence as the hikers prefer one trail over the others. As said in the previous section, place dependence is also known as functional attachment. It is reliant on the physical characteristics of a place whereas place identity refers to the cognitions, emotions and experiences that individuals gain in that place (Williams & Vaske 2003). The two dimensions may seem alike, but literature has proved that they are more a continuum of each other. The third dimension of place attachment will be presented next.

2.1.3 Social bonds

The third dimension, which this study finds an important part of consumer place attachment, is social bonds. Already Relph (1976, 46) recognized the meaning of social bonds in place attachment: place attachment is strongly based on the relationships with the people in the environment rather than the physical setting. Moving on from geography to psychology Low and Altman (1992) have emphasized social bonds in place attachment. Places are the settings in which the interpersonal, community and cultural relationships appear, and people are attached to these social bonds, not merely the place itself (Low & Altman 1992, 7). Proshansky et al. (1983) continue that other people are also quite crucial in forming the place-identity of the individual. Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) compared the social and physical bonds in a neighborhood. Their results showed that social bonds of family, friends and the community were at least as important, if not even more important, as the physical setting itself in shaping place attachment. Milligan's (1998) coffee shop study concentrated on the social bonds of the cafeteria's employees from an interactionalist perspective. She states that when interaction involves meaning, place attachment is formed in to that place. In other words, interactions are the reason that people create place attachment. (Milligan 1998.)

In the context of retail, social bonds are personal connections that take place in a specific service setting, which offers interpersonal interactions and friendships (Beatty et al. 1996; Brocato et al. 2015; Johnstone 2012). Whilst investigating the retail environment from the consumer's perspective, it is crucial to understand the social dimensions of the retail environment (Johnstone & Conroy 2008). Social bonds can be built upon the relationships between the customers and the employees (Beatty et al. 1996; Brocato et al. 2015) or in the

customer-to-customer interactions and friendships (Rosenbaum et al. 2007). Johnstone (2012) distinguished non-commercial relationships from commercial relationship; non-commercial relationships include relationships with family members, friends, acquaintances and colleagues whereas commercial relationships are formed with the retailer. In this study the commercial relationships were more of importance than the non-commercial relationships.

Johnstone (2012) has stated that consumer's social linkage may be even more important than the products at hand or the servicescape's attributes. Emotional support and companionship from other people in the service setting can have a crucial effect on the experience and on the attachment to the place (Rosenbaum et al. 2007). Still, the role of social bonds in place attachment has not been mutually agreed on between the scholars. Some have found no influence between the social bonds dimension and place attachment (e.g. Brocato 2006), while others have found it to be an important aspect, which in some cases even extends beyond the importance of the physical characteristics of the setting (Brocato et al. 2015; Kyle et al. 2005; Milligan 1998). Kyle et al. (2005) have even encouraged future research to include social bonds in the conceptualization of place attachment. It should also be noted that the physical attributes may conduct social contacts and hence indirectly have an impact on place attachment (Johnstone 2012; Lewicka 2011). In the next section, we will focus on the role of place attachment in marketing and commercial settings.

2.1.4 Place attachment in marketing

*"Who are our customers? -- Does this place have any special meaning to the customer?
To what extent is the customer attached to it and dependent on it?"
(Williams & Roggenbuck 1989).*

Already 30 years ago research has been able to combine place attachment and marketing. Though, since that time the literature has given only a little attention to place attachment in the commercial settings (Debenedetti et al. 2014). Quite possibly the term attachment has led the research straight into the field of psychology and therefore social sciences have bypassed attachment in commercial places (Lewicka 2011). It has been thought that commercial places are not adequate enough to activate attachment in customers (Debenedetti et al. 2014) or that marketers are not capable of building the right kind of environments for customers to become attached (Brocato 2006). On the contrary, research done in the field of consumer behavior depicts how emotional and symbolic meaning can be found in commercial places (Debenedetti et al. 2014). In addition, in the service literature Brocato (2006) showed that even the built environment has the ability to establish meaningful and attached relationships between the place and its customers.

Generally, both the place itself and the people in that place have an effect on the strength and type of place attachment - for instance, physical attributes

such as size and social attributes such as status (Scannell & Gifford 2010). However, according to Milligan (1998) it is controversial whether place attachment depends on the physical attributes or not. Arsel, Debenedetti and Merigot (2012) argued that if the physical attributes are transformed but the social attributes are kept the same, consumers should experience similar attachment but just in a different setting. Even if it is impossible to copy a place as it is, managing the servicescape enables the preservability of place attachment (Arsel et al. 2012). The previous thought will be applied in this thesis, as the online settings arguably differ from the offline settings. Though, it is crucial to understand that the service providers cannot entirely manage the place since the customers are the ones who give meaning to that place (Johnstone 2012). As has been noted earlier in this thesis, one of the definitions for place attachment includes giving meaning through interaction. In the retail settings, Debenedetti et al. (2014) showed precisely how consumer attachment is founded on the complex social interactions. With authenticity from the physical setting and familiarity from interaction consumers perceive shopping not merely as a transaction but as a meaningful, treasured experience (Debenedetti et al. 2014).

Social bonds have gained quite broad attention in the retail settings as it has been found such a crucial factor for consumers' shopping. Then again, the two other dimensions of place attachment have not been given as much attention in the field of marketing. Vlachos and Vrechopoulos (2012) studied the emotional and psychological connections between grocery stores and consumers. Their results implicated that understanding the cognitive and emotional preferences of the target group and transforming the store characteristics according to those, would contribute in creating strong identity-based connections with consumers (Vlachos & Vrechopoulos 2012). In addition, Badrinarayanan and Becerra (2019) stated that store attachment is partially comprised of the connection between a store and the customer's self. This thesis has already earlier given support for the formation of place attachment through identity.

For place dependence, the literature has not given much attention, at least not in the exact words. From this thesis, it can be recalled that place dependence forms out of the superiority compared to other similar places. With rational thinking it would seem that this is a key issue when it comes to marketing - how to win the customers over by distinguishing yourself from your competitors? Debenedetti et al. (2014) studied place attachment in commercial settings from a gift economy perspective. When the customers become attached, they experience the feeling of homeyness and in return engage in volunteering, reciprocity and even ambassadorship for the place. With gift economy, customers declare their ultimate loyalty to a specific commercial place. (Debenedetti et al. 2014.) The same finding was made by Thompson and Arsel (2004) with consumers preferring local coffee houses over their global competitors through gift economy. If such customer engagement can be developed, the commercial place should be superior to other places in their customer's eyes.

2.2 Switching intentions

To this point, I have covered the meaning of place attachment and its dimensions and place attachment from a retailing perspective. One of the most crucial aspects in retailing are naturally the customers and their loyalty to a certain retailer. Oliver (1999) has defined consumer loyalty as the commitment to repurchase a product or service again in the future. Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) have turned the term loyalty the other way around into switching intentions/costs. In a longer period of time customers may compare the perceived value from their current retailer to the perceived benefits and switching costs of another retailer. Thus, the current retailer should constantly aim to enhance the perceived value for its customers discouraging them to switch to another retailer. (Anderson & Srinivasan 2003.) Earlier literature discusses the measurement of customer loyalty in two dimensions; the first, behavioral dimension, is where the factors are repeated purchases and engaging in positive word-of-mouth. The second is attitudinal dimension where the customer's intention to engage in loyalty behaviours is reflected. (Kwon & Lennon 2009.) The behavioral outcomes are more of interest in this study.

Switching intentions or customer loyalty for its crucial position in retailing can be found as the measured outcome in quite a few contexts. As well as in the context of place attachment, it is not an unusual outcome to study even though the term place attachment might not be outright in use. Park et al. (2010) studied the effects of brand attachment on store patronage intentions, and their results revealed that brand attachment does predict actual purchase behaviours. Later on, Brocato et al. (2015) found brand attachment to be different from place attachment. Then again, previous brand research has pointed out that even places without a magnificent brand experience may still work as the stage for attachment and eventually lead to ultimate loyalty (Rosenbaum 2006). In the tourism literature Yuksel et al. (2010) showed that place attachment has an important role in predicting loyalty intentions toward a destination. The same kind of results were pointed out by Su, Hsu and Chang (2018) with sports tourists. Their findings showed that place attachment positively influences the revisit intentions of sports tourists. The more attached the triathlon participants were to the specific place, the stronger their behavioral intention was to revisit. (Su et al. 2018.) In a smaller context for destination loyalty, Lee and Shen (2013) indicated how place attachment is a crucial antecedent variable of destination loyalty for recreationists walking their dogs. These studies have created some ground for the research on place attachment and switching intentions but the main studies for this thesis, which take place in the retail and service environment, are presented next. In addition, the first three hypotheses will be presented.

2.2.1 Place attachment and switching intentions

Elisabeth Brocato has been quite the vanguard when it comes to place attachment in the service environment. Her doctoral thesis (2006) addressed that in a restaurant context place attachment significantly impacted the consumer's desire to return to the same establishment. Brocato et al. (2015) continued with the same context with club visitors' place attachment where place attachment emerged as a significant driver of switching intentions. In the retail environment, the term place attachment has not been unanimously used. Vlachos and Vrechopoulos (2012) studied consumer-retailer love, opposed to place attachment, in grocery stores and their findings revealed a positive influence on re-patronage intentions. With a study on store attachment Badrinarayanan and Becerra (2019) pointed out a significant influence on patronage intentions in department stores. In addition, for apparel retailers place attachment has been found as a valid construct as it predicts store loyalty (Johnson et al. 2015). In contrast, Eroglu and Michel (2018) found out in their research on commercial places that customers with high attachment to a place can also begin to reduce or even avoid their patronage over time. This is due to their lack of freedom both psychologically, which is caused by a pressure to buy, and physically which is caused by the need for personal space (Eroglu & Michel 2018). Next, the relationship between switching intentions and the dimensions of place attachment will be looked at more closely.

In the context of servicescape Johnstone (2012) pointed out that, it is critical to acknowledge whether an individual feels like an insider or an outsider when it comes to patronage intentions. If there is a lack of resemblance between the individual and the place (inadequate place identity), the individual will either modify the place itself or find a place, which reflects the individual better (Johnstone 2012). In addition, Brocato's (2006) results verified that place identity, place dependence and affective attachment lead to patronage intentions whereas social bonds were found to have no significant influence. Even though place identity and place dependence are very close to one another, it can be anticipated that they will issue as two separate dimensions of place attachment (Raymond et al. 2010).

Quite a few studies have found a significant link between switching intentions and the two dimensions, place identity and place dependence. In tourism literature both Yuksel et al. (2010) and Alexandris et al. (2006) showed that place identity and place dependence are applicable in their contexts, and that they have significant effects on loyalty. In the study done by Yuksel et al. (2010) place dependence had a stronger effect on cognitive loyalty whereas place identity had a stronger effect on affective loyalty. Lee's et al.'s (2012) study aligned somewhat with the previous: place identity and social bonding, which were combined as one indicator, had a positive influence on revisit intentions for festival visitors. On the contrary, they also made an interesting finding that place dependence had a negative influence on revisit intentions. The latter result does not have too much support from other studies. As in the tourism context, in recreational settings it has also been proven that place identity and place

dependence have positive and significant impacts on behavioral intentions for revisiting (Lee & Shen 2013; Su et al. 2018). Based on the information available, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Place identity has a negative effect on the switching intentions of consumers.

H2: Place dependence has a negative effect on the switching intentions of consumers

Due to the contrary thoughts on social bonds being part of place attachment, their effect on switching intentions lacks quantitative research. Brocato et al. (2015) had an open question in their otherwise quantitative study, in which they reflected social bonds as a critical factor in the decision-making process of the visitation to a provider. Another qualitative study was done by Johnstone and Conroy (2008) where they provided support for the social dimensions influencing an individual's perceived pleasurable shopping experience and therefore the patronage intentions in the retail environment. Johnstone (2012) continued later with a qualitative study researching patronage intentions to non-commercial places. His results indicated that non-commercial relationships are important for patronage intentions and they might be even more crucial than commercial relationships. In some cases, social bonds were even the sole reason for a customer's visitation to a non-commercial place (Johnstone 2012). In addition to the former studies, Hsieh et al. (2005) researched how relational bonds² influence different goods. In their results, they showed that social bonds create switching costs because the customers would, for example lose the mutual understanding they've built with the personnel and other customers (Hsieh et al. 2005). With the available literature given, the third hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Social bonds have a negative effect on the switching intentions of consumers.

To my current knowledge, there are yet no peer-reviewed studies about place attachment which would compare it in the online and offline retail environment. A doctoral thesis written by Katherine Shaw (2011) studied the role of retail place attachment in online shopping. Her results failed to support that retail place attachment would increase online shopping patronage (Shaw 2011). On the other hand, as presented above a number of studies in the traditional retail context have shown place attachment having a statistically significant effect on brick-and-mortar stores (e.g. Badrinarayanan & Becerra 2019; Johnson et al. 2015; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos 2012). In the next section place attachment will be compared in the offline and the online shopping environments. In addition, the last three hypotheses will be presented.

² Financial, social and structural bonds

2.2.2 Offline and online shopping environments

The research on customer loyalty or switching intentions in the traditional retailing environment is extensive whereas in the online environment the research could not even be as extensive due to the lack of years for online retailers. Nevertheless, in recent years the traditional retail environment has encountered profound changes that have irrevocably changed the brick-and-mortar retail stores (Badrinarayanan & Becerra 2019). The cost of switching in the online environment is extremely low and therefore creating and maintaining customer loyalty is more challenging than ever (Kwon & Lennon 2009). As a result of the growing online retail environment, consumers may compare competing products with minimal time and effort. E-retailing compared to traditional brick-and-mortar stores offers advantages like greater convenience, enhanced market outreach and lower cost structures. (Srinivasan, Anderson & Ponnavaolu, 2002.) It is an absolute necessity for retailers to understand how to create customer loyalty in the online environment, when the competition is only a click away (Anderson & Srinivasan 2003; Kwon & Lennon 2009).

As one can imagine, online retailing also has its own challenges (Srinivasan et al. 2002). Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) believe that without the knowledge of creating customer loyalty in the online environment, even the best-established online business models will fade away. A tremendous problem is that the extensive amount of information available and the possibility for comparison can easily turn into a negative effect on loyalty – the variety of products increases the switching intentions of the consumers (Heitz-Spahn 2013). Chou et al. (2016) continues that the attractiveness of competitors has significant impacts on the intention of switching within-channel. Within-channel switching means that a customer gathers information from one online store but then makes the purchase from another online provider (Chou et al. 2016). Within-channel switching is much more difficult in the offline environment, where the consumer needs to take spatial and temporal issues in to account. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4. Place dependence has a significantly stronger negative effect on the switching intentions of consumers in the offline retail environment compared to the online environment.

A study done by Badrinarayanan, Becerra, Kim and Madhavaram (2012) showed that the purchase intentions in online stores of multi-channel retailers is dependent on the transference and consistency it reflects from the offline store. The consumer's preference for a specific offline store may affect the choice of the online store (Dawes & Nenycz-Thiel 2014). In an online grocery context Verhagen and Dolen (2009) revealed that consumers might feel more confident about an online grocery store from the same chain as their preferred offline grocery store. Generally, the online stores of multi-channel retailers are extensions of the existing offline stores and customers create causative conclusions about the

developed online stores (Badrinarayanan et al. 2012). According to Melis, Campo, Breugelmans, and Lamey (2015) the more customers shop in the online store, the less they require the reflection and familiarity from the offline store. However, consequently the switching intentions in the online context increase as the experience in the online store grows (Melis et al. 2015). With the available literature given, the fifth hypothesis is proposed:

H5. Place identity has a significantly stronger negative effect on the switching intentions of consumers in the offline retail environment compared to the online environment.

Research has proved that social bonds and interaction is as crucial to customers shopping experience in the online context (Wang & Head 2007) as it is in the offline (Ballantyne & Nilsson 2017). Earlier studies have suggested that customers who are motivated by social interaction may prefer the offline context to the online counterpart (Rohm & Swaminathan 2004) and some customers choose to do their shopping online explicitly to avoid social interaction (Ozen & Engizek 2013). For others it is crucial to touch the products or socialize directly with the personnel. As these actions are not possible in the online context, these customers tend to avoid online shopping. (Sarkar 2011.) With the above statements, the last hypothesis can be proposed:

H6. Social bonds have a significantly stronger negative effect on the switching intentions of consumers in the offline retail environment compared to the online environment.

2.3 Research model

Now that the relevant literature has been looked over and the hypotheses have been established the research model can be presented. Figure 1 illustrates the research model. In recreational settings, Kyle, Graefe and Manning (2005) have constructed place attachment from three factors: place identity, place dependence and social bonds, and their data shows that place identity and place dependence do act independently. In the same context, Plunkett, Fulthorp and Paris (2019) also had an adequate model fit with these dimensions, though behavioral loyalty was the outcome. In service settings, Brocato (2006) and Brocato et al. (2015) found evidence that supported the construction of place attachment from the place identity and place dependence dimensions, as well as support for the social and affective components of place attachment. Both, the physical and social aspects of a place should be focused on (Brocato et al. 2015, study 2). As the online environment has gathered more and more attention in retailing, it is useful to find out how these dimensions act in both offline and online environments.

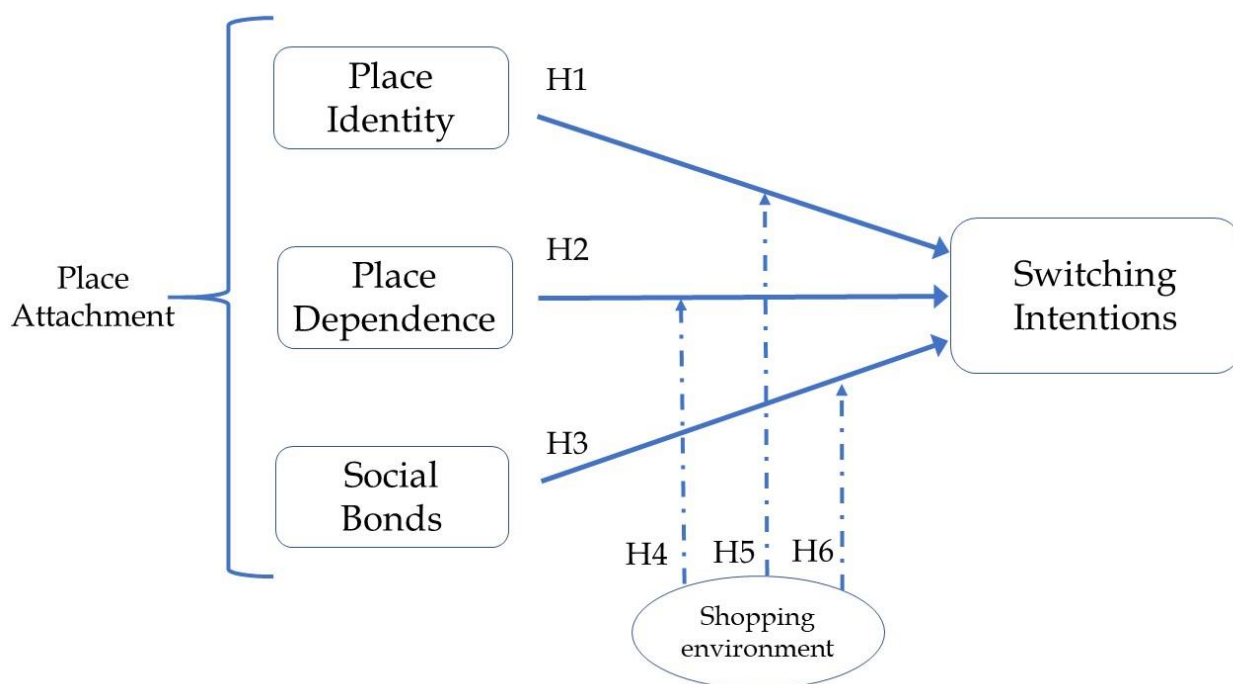


Figure 1: Research model

In the earlier chapters, the hypotheses have been given support from the literature. Table 2 provides a summary of the hypotheses and the key literature that has been discussed.

Table 2: List of hypotheses

Hypotheses	Key literature
H1: Place identity → Switching intentions	Alexandris et al. 2006; Brocato 2006; Johnstone 2012; Lee et al. 2012; Lee & Shen 2013; Su et al. 2018; Yuksel et al. 2010
H2: Place dependence → Switching intentions	Alexandris et al. 2006; Brocato 2006; Kyle et al. 2004; Lee et al. 2012; Lee & Shen 2013; Su et al. 2018; Yuksel et al. 2010
H3: Social bonds → Switching intentions	Brocato 2015; Hsieh et al. 2005; Johnstone & Conroy 2008
H4: Place dependence in offline and online contexts (moderating effect)	Chou et al. 2016; Heitz-Spahn 2013
H5: Place identity in offline and online contexts (moderating effect)	Badrinarayanan et al. 2012; Dawes & Nenycz-Thiel 2014; Melis et al. 2015; Verhagen and Dolen 2009
H6: Social bonds in offline and online contexts (moderating effect)	Rohm & Swaminathan 2004; Sarkar 2011

3 METHODOLOGY AND DATA

3.1 Research design

In the upcoming chapter the approach of the study will be justified and the collection of the data as well as the style of the questionnaire will be explained. For data collection, a quantitative approach is quite often applied when there exists well-defined research problems or theoretical models. To validate these concepts and models, it usually requires the use of data from large-scale questionnaire surveys. (Hair, Wolfinbarger, Money, Samouel & Page 2015, 218.) According to Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2005, 131) the primary aspects for quantitative approach are the conclusions and theories from previous studies, hypotheses, definitions of constructs, accurate planning of data collection, statistically analysable variables and conclusions that can be based on the analysis.

There are many benefits for using a quantitative approach; the results from the quantitative study can be generalized to the whole population from which the representative sample was acquired. Moreover, causal relationships can be measured in a quantitative approach, and quantitative studies are quite simple to replicate. (Bryman & Bell 2007, 168-171.) By testing the hypotheses with the collected data and applying statistical measures, a quantitative approach offers objectivity. As the respondents answer in numbers, the opinion of the researcher does not affect the testing of the hypotheses. (Hair et al. 2015, 155.) Then again, quantitative research has also been given its fair share of criticism. The perspective in a quantitative approach can be seen as too static and not in line with the realism in people and their social lives (Bryman & Bell 2007, 174). Even though the quantitative method aims at objectivity, the researcher's opinions have at least an effect on the design of the study questions (Hair et al. 2015, 155). Still, due to the benefits of quantitative approach, the presented research problem and sufficient amount of earlier literature the quantitative approach was chosen for this thesis.

3.2 Data collection and questionnaire

In this thesis the data collection was executed using the survey method. A structured direct survey is the most popular method to gather data (Malhotra, Birks & Wills 2013, 327) and a questionnaire is one of the most traditional forms of survey research. With the survey method, extensive amount of information from the assorted sample can be obtained in a standardized manner. (Bryman & Bell 2007, 56.) There are several advantages for using the survey method; first,

the questionnaire is simple to master. Second, the gathered data is consistent because the responses have been settled according to the limited alternatives. Using fixed-response questions cuts down the variability in the results that may be caused by differences in interviewers. Finally, coding, analysis and interpretation of the data are relatively simple. (Malhotra et al. 2013, 328.) Naturally, the survey method also has its disadvantages. The obtained results may be considered too shallow as the questions and alternatives have been chosen in advance. There is always a possibility for misunderstandings, as the respondents have to interpret the questions on their own. Frankly, there is no certainty that the respondents have chosen their answers with a serious and honest mind. (Bryman & Bell 2007, 242-243; Hirsjärvi et al. 2005, 190.) As the sample is large and the aim of this study is to investigate the behavior, beliefs and emotions of consumers, survey method is appropriate.

The stores that were utilized in this study are Pentik, Iittala, Stockman and Ikea and they are presented below in Table 4. These stores were chosen for the survey because they can be thought to trigger emotions and attachment both in the offline and the online environments.

Table 3: The utilized stores

Store	Size	Description
Pentik	Small	A Finnish design store that specializes in home decor products and design objects.
Iittala	Small	A Finnish design store that specializes in interior design and tableware.
Stockman	Large	A Finnish department store that mainly sells luxurious lifestyle products. Stockman has been struggling with the rising of online competition.
Ikea	Global	A Swedish worldwide known furniture and kitchen appliance store.

The survey utilized in this thesis was ordered from a marketing company called Bilendi Oy (See: www.bilendi.fi). The company has an online panel which consists of 80000 voluntary participants. The panel holds plenty of surveys that can be answered, and in this case, an invitation was sent to those participants who live in a city, which has one of the four stores mentioned. The participants who got the invitation were free to answer to the questionnaire if they wished to. After the participants have given their response to a survey, they earn points. With enough points, the respondents are awarded with a prize. The prize system may have biased the results, as some of the respondents may not care about

answering truthfully but rather than just getting a prize. Then again, the people who answer these questionnaires are quite used to them and might understand how pivotal their honest answers are.

The questionnaire was not tested on a real sample but the staff of Bilendi Oy went through the questionnaire and made some modest changes. The aim with the questionnaire was to gather 1000 responses, 500 from the offline context and another 500 from the online. As the invitations had been sent, the offline context got rapidly 800 responses whereas the online context took more time and attained 300 responses. The overall amount of responses received was 1169. The questionnaire was open to the respondents a little over a week in the beginning of December 2018. The sample gathered was somewhat leading as the participants had to live in a city with one of the four stores, even though they could have just visited the online store. Nonetheless, both samples are large enough for the same measurements to be executed.

In total, the questionnaire consisted of 51 items of which 14 items were utilized in this study. Nearly all measures in the questionnaire were adapted from peer-reviewed journal articles and were thus established on theory. Place identity and place dependence were adopted from Johnson et al. (2015) and they were both measured using three items. Social bonds were adopted from Hsieh et al. (2005) and the items were slightly modified to fit into this study. Social bonds consisted of five items. Switching intentions were adopted from Brocato et al. (2015) who also had relatively similar measures for place identity and place dependence as Johnson et al. (2015). To identify possible biased answers, one of the items for switching intentions was reversed. However, later this item had to be removed from the analyses.

The questionnaire began with a filter question, which pursued to drop out the respondents who had not visited one of the four stores in the last six months. All further questions would concern precisely the store that they chose in the first question. After the first screening question, the respondents also had to choose whether they had visited the offline or the online store. The third question was an open question where respondents were to describe their latest shopping experience in one of the four stores. Throughout the questionnaire the questions for offline and online stores were similar apart from minor changes in wording. There were no missing values.

The simpler questions, such as gender, age and region were asked first (Hirsjärvi et al. 2005, 192). For easier comparison and analysis, the questionnaire was built on structured questions. Apart from the demographic questions, the items were measured with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree". The Likert scale is a suitable option for measuring data, when the respondents estimate their own perceptions. A 7-point scale also provides more accuracy in the responses rather than a 5-point scale. (Metsämuuronen 2011, 70;79.) The option for "I don't know" was not provided since the questions were mainly related to the experiences of the respondent. The part of the questionnaire that was utilized for this study is provided in the

appendix. The measures used, and their source of adaptation are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: List of measures

Measure	Source of adaptation	Number of variables
Place identity	Johnson et al. (2015)	3
Place dependence	Johnson et al. (2015)	3
Social bonds	Hsieh et al. (2005)	5
Switching intentions	Brocato et al. (2015)	3

3.3 Data Preparation and Analysis

The acquired data was transferred from Excel to IBM SPSS to execute the plausible analyses. Some of the items were deleted due to their overlap with information already given from similar items. The data preparation was relatively simple as Bilendi Oy had to some extent cleaned up the data. The first phase of the analysis concerned only the basic statistical analysis such as calculating the frequencies and percentages of distributions. These results will be provided in the next chapter.

In the second phase, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted in SPSS and AMOS programs. The factor analyses were applied to validate the measurement model. With the analyses, unfit variables could be removed from the measures. (Metsämuuronen 2011, 609-613.) Based on the hypotheses the results of the factor analyses were utilized in a structural equation modelling (SEM). SEM is generally applied when determining that a certain model is valid. (Malhotra et al. 2013, 866; 868.) As the research objective in this thesis is to test and confirm provided theory, the appropriate method to use is covariance-based SEM (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt 2011). The model fit was tested using multiple indicators. The direct path coefficients were investigated as well as the moderating effects according to the hypotheses. In addition, the mean value differences between the offline and online shopping environments were measured. The detailed data analyses are provided in the next chapter.

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Descriptive statistics

The first demographics of the respondents, gender and age, are presented in Table 5. A small majority of the respondents were women (54.4%, $n=636$) whereas the rest identified themselves as men (45.6 %, $n=533$). The result was suitable for this study, as it enables the possibility to compare the differences between genders. As with gender, the distribution of different age groups was very even as well. The most significant age group was 25-34-year-olds (21.8 %, $n=255$) and the second 45-54-year-olds (17.5 %, $n=205$). The eldest respondents from 55-64-year-olds (13.9%, $n=162$) to 65-75-year-olds (12.9%, $n=151$) were the smallest groups but their number of respondents were still valid enough for age comparison to be made.

Table 5: Gender and age

Gender	%	<i>n</i>
Male	45.6	533
Female	54.4	636
Total	100	1169

Age	%	<i>n</i>
18 - 24 years	15.1	176
25 - 34 years	21.8	255
35 - 44 years	17.5	205
45 - 54 years	18.8	220
55 - 64 years	13.9	162
65 - 75 years	12.9	151
Total	100	1169

The results for level of income and life situation are presented below in Table 6. The income level with the respondents was overall quite well distributed as each income group got at least some responses. The higher the income level the smaller the number of respondents: the lowest percentage 4.4% was with an income level of over 100 000€ ($n=52$). The most significant income levels were 20 001 – 35 000€ (18.3%, $n=214$) and 35 001 – 50 000€ (18.1%, $n=212$), which could be considered as the income levels of the middle-class. A quite significant number of respondents (17.4%, $n=203$) do not know or do not want to tell about their level of income. The reason behind it could be that the level of income was

one of the last questions in the questionnaire, thus the respondents were quite done with their answering.

Life situation was the only demographic question, which did not have such an even distribution. The most significant situations were "I live with my partner" (35.2%, $n=411$) and "I live alone" (33.4%, $n=390$). "I live with my parents" (3.0%, $n=35$) and "Other family arrangement" (2.1%, $n=24$) received the smallest percentages.

Table 6: Income level and life situation

Income level (gross)	%	<i>n</i>
Under 20 000€	16.2	189
20 001 - 35 000€	18.3	214
35 001 - 50 000€	18.1	212
50 001 - 75 000€	15.7	183
75 001 - 100 000€	9.9	116
Over 100 000€	4.4	52
I don't know / I don't want to tell	17.4	203
Total	100	1169

Life situation	%	<i>n</i>
I live with my partner	35.2	411
I live alone	33.4	390
I live with my partner and children	22.2	259
I'm a single-parent	4.3	50
I live with my parents	3.0	35
Other family arrangement	2.1	24
Total	100	1169

The last demographic questions are presented below in Table 7 and they consist of the shopping environment, store name, and these two combined. The shopping environment shows that three and four quarters of the respondents have answered to the questionnaire according to their latest physical store experience (74.7%, $n=873$). The rest, one-fourth have answered according to their latest online store experience (25.3%, $n=296$). Even though the physical store environment has gathered the majority of the responses, the value from the online store visitors is big enough for comparison. It is not surprising that the physical store has such a majority as the stores in this study still stress the physical experience over the online experience.

Which store the respondents have visited recently shows a more significant percentage with Ikea than the other stores. Over half of the respondents have chosen to answer about their experience in Ikea (51.8%, $n=605$). The smallest participation can be found with Pentik (8.8%, $n=103$) which is not

surprising if we compare the size of these stores. The value of Pentik visitors is still big enough for comparison with the other stores. In the last section of Table 7, the results show how the distribution has gone between the different stores and the shopping environment. In each store, the physical experience has been reported more often in the questionnaire than the online experience.

Table 7: Shopping environment and store name

Shopping environment	%	<i>n</i>
Physical store	74.7	873
Online store	25.3	296
Total	100	1169

Store name	%	<i>n</i>
Pentik	8.8	103
Iittala	12.4	145
Stockmann	27.0	316
Ikea	51.8	605
Total	100	1169

Store name and environment	%	<i>n</i>
Pentik, physical store	7.3	85
Pentik, online store	1.5	18
Iittala, physical store	7.2	84
Iittala, online store	5.2	61
Stockmann, physical store	19.2	225
Stockmann, online store	7.8	91
Ikea, physical store	41	479
Ikea, online store	10.8	126
Total	100	1169

4.2 Mean comparisons

Mean comparisons were executed between the offline and the online shopping environments with t-tests and variance analysis (ANOVA). T-test is the most proper method that can be utilized when comparing the means of two independent groups (Karjaluoto 2007). Table 8 presents the means, standard deviations and p-values of the mean comparison between the two shopping environments. Observing the shopping environments, it can be stated that place dependence is more crucial in the offline environment ($n=873$, $\mu=4.021$, $\sigma=1.483$) than in the online environment ($n=296$, $\mu=3.811$, $\sigma=1.527$). The difference between the two environments is statistically significant ($p=0.036$, $t=2.095$). A similar

result can be found from switching intentions. Consumers tend to switch more easily to a different store in the online environment ($n=296$, $\mu=3.784$, $\sigma=1.535$) than in the offline environment ($n=873$, $\mu=3.381$, $\sigma=1.487$). The difference is statistically significant as well ($p=0.00$, $t=-3,990$).

Table 8: Shopping environment mean comparison

Factor	Shopping environment	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
Place identity	Offline	4.034	1.500	0.551	0.581
	Online	3.979	1.473		
Place dependence	Offline	4.021	1.483	2.095	0.036*
	Online	3.811	1.527		
Social bonds	Offline	3.271	1.490	-1.379	0.168
	Online	3.410	1.538		
Switching intentions	Offline	3.381	1.487	-3.990	0.00***
	Online	3.784	1.535		

* $p < 0.05$

*** $p < 0.001$

Table 9 presents the means, standard deviations and p-values between genders. The only statistically significant difference between gender can be found from switching intentions ($p=0.00$, $t=4,808$). Males ($n=533$, $\mu=3.713$, $\sigma=1.472$) seem to be more willing to switch between providers than females ($n=636$, $\mu=3.291$, $\sigma=1.514$). There are no significant differences between genders with the dimensions of place attachment.

Table 9: Gender mean comparison

Factor	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
Place identity	Male	3.957	1.496	-1.324	0.186
	Female	4.073	1.489		
Place dependence	Male	3.888	1.473	-1.675	0.094
	Female	4.035	1.514		
Social bonds	Male	3.355	1.530	1.011	0.312
	Female	3.265	1.480		
Switching intentions	Male	3.713	1.472	4.808	0.00***
	Female	3.291	1.514		

*** $p < 0.001$

To measure the differences between the four stores, a variance analysis was conducted. The main results of the one-way ANOVA are presented in Table 10 and the rest are attached to the appendix. When observing place identity, Ikea has a statistically significant difference with Pentik ($p=0.006$, $F=4.862$). Therefore,

the consumers who shop at Ikea ($n=605$, $\mu=3.904$, $\sigma=1.474$) do not identify with the store as much as those consumers who shop at Pentik ($n=103$, $\mu=4.420$, $\sigma=1.521$). With place dependence ($p=0.000$, $F=8.511$), Stockman ($n=316$, $\mu=3.613$, $\sigma=1.525$) differs significantly from all the other stores (Pentik: $p=0.002$, $n=103$, $\mu=4.210$, $\sigma=1.646$; Iittala: $p=0.006$, $n=145$, $\mu=4.099$, $\sigma=1.373$; Ikea: $p=0.000$, $n=605$, $\mu=4.081$, $\sigma=1.456$). It would seem that the consumers who have done their shopping in Stockman are not that dependent on Stockman compared to how dependent the consumers of the other three stores are. Social bonds ($p=0.003$, $F=4.622$) differ as well between some of the stores. There is a significant difference between Pentik ($n=103$, $\mu=3.773$, $\sigma=1.597$) and Stockman ($p=0.010$, $n=316$, $\mu=3.244$, $\sigma=1.518$) as well as Pentik and Ikea ($p=0.003$, $n=605$, $\mu=3.223$, $\sigma=1.462$). Finally, the differences between switching intentions are also significant among Stockman and the other three stores (Pentik: $p=0.002$, $n=103$, $\mu=3.257$, $\sigma=1.752$; Iittala: $p=0.000$, $n=145$, $\mu=3.272$, $\sigma=1.506$; Ikea: $p=0.000$, $n=605$, $\mu=3.369$, $\sigma=1.429$). The consumers shopping in Stockman ($n=316$, $\mu=3.873$, $\sigma=1.510$) are more likely to switch to another provider than the consumers shopping in the other stores. (Pentik: $n=103$, $\mu=3.257$, $\sigma=1.752$; Iittala: $n=145$, $\mu=3.272$, $\sigma=1.506$; Ikea: $n=605$, $\mu=3.369$, $\sigma=1.429$). The results for the variance analysis can to some extent be explained by the differences in the features and sizes of the stores which were presented in the previous chapter. In the upcoming sections, the pre-analysis and building of the structural model will be displayed.

Table 10: Store multiple comparison

	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean square between groups	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Place identity				10.728	4.862	0.002**
Pentik	103	4.420	1.521			
Iittala	145	4.246	1.412			
Stockmann	316	4.008	1.529			
Ikea	605	3.904	1.474			
Total	1169	4.020	1.493			
Place dependence				18.703	8.511	0.000***
Pentik	103	4.210	1.646			
Iittala	145	4.099	1.373			
Stockmann	316	3.613	1.525			
Ikea	605	4.081	1.456			
Total	1169	3.968	1.497			
Social bonds				10.343	4.622	0.003**
Pentik	103	3.773	1.597			
Iittala	145	3.455	1.515			
Stockmann	316	3.244	1.518			
Ikea	605	3.223	1.462			
Total	1169	3.306	1.503			
Switching intentions				22.588	10.154	0.000***
Pentik	103	3.257	1.752			
Iittala	145	3.272	1.506			
Stockmann	316	3.873	1.510			
Ikea	605	3.369	1.429			
Total	1169	3.483	1.509			

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

4.3 Factor analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was executed in AMOS with four different factors. The factor loadings and their composite reliabilities can be found below in Table 11. The composite reliabilities are estimates of the factor's internal consistency and they are valid when > 0.7 (Hair et al. 2011). The factor loadings presented are sufficiently high (Karjaluoto & Munnukka 2016).

Table 11: Factor loadings

Factor	Composite reliability	Variable	Factor loading
Place identity	0.820	Place_ID1	0.908
		Place_ID2	0.945
		Place_ID3	0.825
Place dependence	0.878	Place_DEP1	0.639
		Place_DEP2	0.945
		Place_DEP3	0.912
Social bonds	0.926	Social_BONDS1	0.764
		Social_BONDS2	0.903
		Social_BONDS3	0.886
		Social_BONDS4	0.802
		Social_BONDS5	0.862
Switching intentions	0.923	Switch_INT1	0.949
		Switch_INT2	0.706

The convergent validity of the factors was measured with average variance extracted values (AVE), which are listed below in Table 12 as well as the construct correlations and the square roots of AVE. The AVE value should be > 0.50 to indicate convergent validity in a sufficient manner. The discriminant validity was measured as well. The square root of AVE should be higher than correlations between the latent construct and other latent constructs in all of the cases. In addition, an indicator's loading with its latent factor should be higher than the cross loadings. (Hair et al. 2011.) The results from the confirmatory factor analysis allows to proceed with the working of the structural model.

Table 12: AVE, construct correlations and square root of AVE

Factor	AVE	Place identity	Place dependence	Social bonds	Switching intentions
Switching intentions	0.700	0.836			
Place dependence	0.711	-0.263	0.843		
Social bonds	0.714	0.001	0.019	0.845	
Place identity	0.799	-0.250	0.812	0.050	0.894

4.4 Structural model

After the factor analyses, the overall model fit was tested with multiple indicators in AMOS. The model fit results are presented below in Table 13. The first indicator, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), is a measure of approximate fit in the population (Schermelele-Engel & Moosbrugger 2003). It can be thought as the most important indicator for the model fit and it should be <0.08 (Karjaluo & Munnukka 2016). As the RMSEA result is 0.044 the model is accepted. The other indicators for the functionality of the model should as well be investigated. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) should be >0.9 and the Relative Fit Index (RFI), the Incremental Fit Index (IFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) should all be >0.95 (See Table 13). Values of these tests range from zero to 1.00, with a value close to 1.00 indicating good fit (Schermelele-Engel & Moosbrugger 2003). The chi square statistic is 192.95 with 60 degrees of freedom ($p=0.000$). The chi square in relation to the degrees of freedom results in 3.216 (<5.0) and therefore the model and data have a good fit. (Karjaluo & Munnukka 2016.) With the above criteria reached, the overall model fit can be stated to be excellent.

Table 13: Model fit results

RMSEA	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
0.044	0.983	0.978	0.988	0.985	0.988

The significance of the path coefficients as well as the R^2 measures are the primary evaluation criteria for the structural model (Hair et al. 2011). The results for these are shown in Table 14. Standardized path coefficients were used to observe connection strengths. From the three dimensions of place attachment, only place dependence had a significant negative effect on switching intentions ($\beta=-0.177, p<0.01$). Thus, H2 is supported. Place identity and social bonds did not have significant negative effects on switching intentions. Therefore, H1 and H3 are not supported. The R^2 measure for switching intentions was rather low ($R^2=0.073$). Generally, in consumer behavior studies when $R^2=0.20$ the result is considered high (Hair et al. 2011). As the model is relatively new, and place attachment has not been properly researched in this environment, the R^2 measure can be seen valid.

Table 14: Hypotheses' results

Hypothesis	R^2	β	C.R.	p -value	Result
Dependent variable: Switching intentions	0.073	-	-	-	-
H1: Place identity → Switching intentions	-	-0.106	-1.778	0.075	Not supported
H2: Place dependence → Switching intentions	-	-0.177**	-2.849	0.004	Supported
H3: Social bonds → Switching intentions	-	0.08	0.266	0.791	Not supported

** $p < 0.01$

4.4.1 Moderating effects

After the direct path coefficients were measured, the sample was divided into two groups to measure the moderating effects. The results of the moderation analysis are presented in Table 15. The division was done according to whether the respondent had answered about the offline shopping environment ($n=873$) or the online shopping environment ($n=296$). As with the direct effects, place dependence was the only dimension with a significant difference between the offline and online environments ($\beta_1=-0.262$, $\beta_2=0.082$, $t>1.96$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, consumers are more dependent on offline stores and less likely to switch between providers than in online stores. Thus, H4 was supported. Place identity and social bonds did not result in significant differences between the two shopping environments, and therefore H5 and H6 were not supported. The R^2 for switching intentions in the offline environment was 0.134 and in the online environment only 0.002. The value for the offline environment is decent, and the value for the online environment can be understood with the provided theory in mind. The switching costs in the online environment are relatively low compared to the offline environment.

Table 15: Moderating effects

Hypothesis	Offline		Online		t-value	p-value	Result
	R ²	β_1	R ²	β_2			
Dependent variable: Switching intentions	0.134	-	0.002	-	-	-	-
H4: Place dependence in the online context	-	-0.262*	-	0.082*	2.097	0.036	Supported
H5: Place identity in the online context	-	-0.094	-	-0.052	0.334	0.738	Not supported
H6: Social bonds in the online context	-	-0.005	-	0.004	0.173	0.863	Not supported

* $p < 0.05$

The structural model with direct and moderating path coefficients is presented below in Figure 2. The direct coefficients from the three dimensions of place attachment represent the first three hypotheses. As can be seen, place dependence was the only dimension with a significant, negative effect on the behavioral outcome. The moderating effects present the last three hypotheses and they show both the offline and the online standardized beta coefficients. With the moderating effects, place dependence had a significant difference between the shopping environments and the other two dimensions did not.

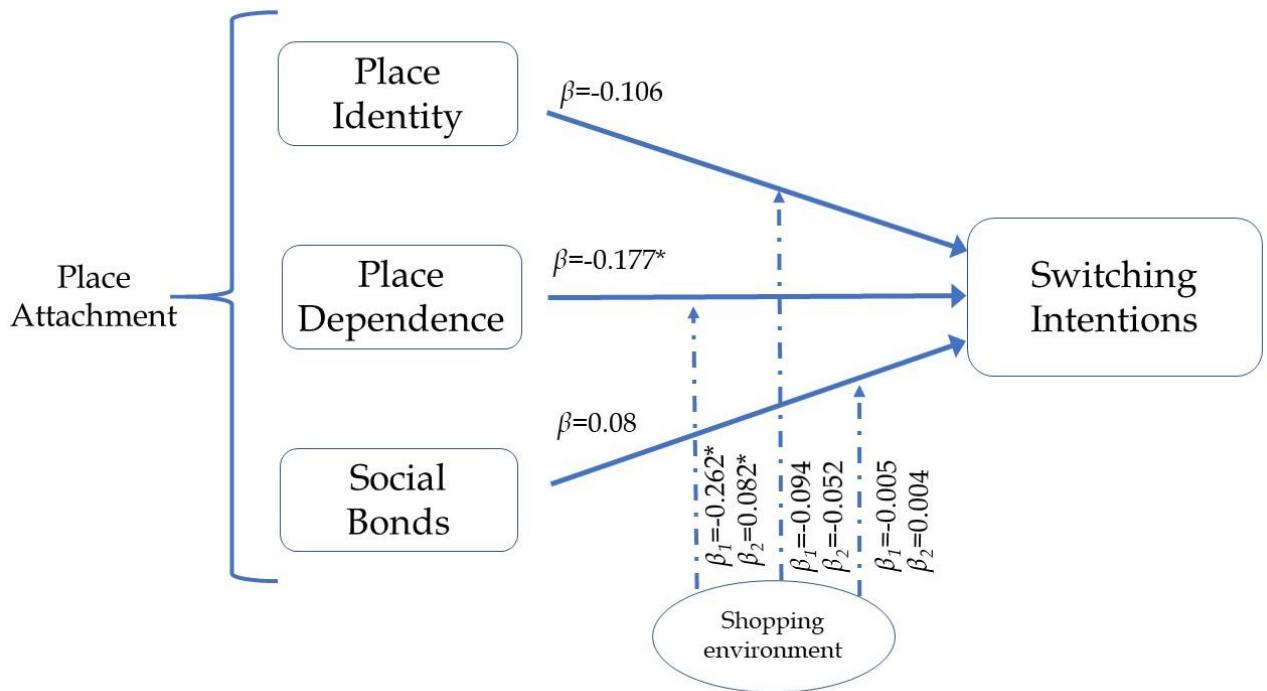


Figure 2: Structural model

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Theoretical contributions

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the role of place attachment in a retail context, and to find out whether it has an effect on the switching intentions of consumers. Following on previous research, place attachment consisted of three dimensions: place identity, place dependence and social bonds (e.g. Brocato et al. 2015; Johnson et al. 2015). In addition, this study focused on finding if place attachment differs in the offline and the online shopping environments. The differences were investigated through moderating effects of the three dimensions of place attachment in both contexts. Thus, the following research questions were applied in the beginning of this study:

- How do the three dimensions of place attachment influence the switching intentions of consumers?
- How do the three dimensions of place attachment differ in offline and online shopping environments?

From the three dimensions, place dependence was the only one to have a significant negative effect on consumers' switching intentions in the retail context. This is somewhat in contrary with previous studies as generally both place dependence and place identity have had an effect on the behavioral outcome (e.g. Brocato et al. 2015; Johnson et al. 2015; Lee & Shen 2013; Williams & Vaske 2003). With the results from this study place identity and social bonds did not have significant effects on the consumers' switching intentions. However, place identity did have a minor negative effect on the switching intentions of consumers. The present results reveal that the dimensions of place attachment do not act uniformly and that is consistent with previous studies; in the tourism literature and recreational settings, place identity has been the stronger predictor of a behavioral outcome than place dependence. (Kyle et al. 2004; Lee et al. 2012; Yuksel et al. 2010). Social bonds having no effect on switching intentions was not in line with previous studies (Hsieh et al. 2005; Milligan 1998; Rosenbaum 2006). An exception with Brocato's (2006) research in the service settings where she as well did not find any connection between social bonds and patronage intentions. According to the results of this study it would seem, that place attachment plays only a mild role for the switching intentions of consumers in a retail context. The context in which this study was implemented, was quite dissimilar from previous studies, and could therefore explain the differences in the outcomes.

The second research question focused on the differences of place attachment between the offline and online shopping environments. As place

attachment has not been, at least to my current knowledge, studied in the online environment, there were few pre-assumptions. The results revealed that at least from the R^2 coefficient of determination, it can be seen that consumers' switching intentions in the offline environment are much more dependent on the place attachment dimensions than in the online environment.

In the moderation analysis, place dependence was the only dimension to have a significant difference between the environments. The effect on switching intentions was negative in the offline context but in the online context, it was positive. As thought, customers tend to be more dependent on the physical store and its attributes compared to an online store. In addition, as Chou et al. (2016) noted customers tend to stick with an offline store and are more eager to switch stores in the online environment. The strength of place attachment decreases if there are many substitutes available for the place (Williams et al. 1992) and this is exactly the case for online stores where competition is so close at hand.

Surprisingly, social bonds and place identity showed no significant differences between the two environments. It would seem that the differences lie in the physical characteristics rather than in the experienced interaction and emotions. As mentioned before, the purchase intentions in online stores of multi-channel retailers are dependent on the transference and consistency they reflect from the offline store (Badrinarayanan et al. 2012). All four of the stores studied in this thesis are multi-channel retailers, and therefore it is not that surprising that they present similar results with their online counterparts about identification. Even still, with one dimension differing so profoundly between the two environments, it can be stated that place attachment is unique in both contexts.

5.2. Managerial implications

As place dependence was the dimension to stand out in this study, it is necessary for managers to understand the significance of the physical characteristics in a store. The quality of the store should be high enough to prevent customers from gaining superior experiences from other stores, and therefore become dependent on that store. Place identity having a minor effect on the switching intentions of consumers should still be a reminder for managers to not forget about the emotions, experiences and cognitions that consumers gain in that place. According to Johnstone (2012) if there is a lack of place identity, the consumer will either modify the place itself or find another place which reflects the consumer's identity better. In the context of this study, the advice for managers would be to focus on increasing functional attachment without forgetting the emotional attachment of consumers. As mentioned earlier, the two dimensions go hand-in-hand.

An interesting finding was that social bonds appear to have no effect on the switching intentions of consumers in this context. Though, when studying

neighbourhoods Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) pointed out that individuals may prefer a certain place above others even without any interaction. Therefore, managers should not be too troubled with the interaction that their customers receive and focus more on the aspects that are under their control. Another intriguing finding was that there is no difference in social bonds between the offline and the online environments. This is quite the opposite of what common sense would say. Then again, it should not be a surprise that today's consumers know in which channel to shop if they prefer face-to-face interaction. Therefore, it is important to understand that consumers are self-directed, and managers need to come up with new ideas to attract consumers rather than rely on excellent customer service.

As all four of the stores in this study were multi-channel retailers, it is good for the managers to understand the connection between their offline and online stores. They are highly linked to each other and they can be seen as a continuum of each other (Badrinarayanan et al. 2012). If consumers experience a negative situation in either environment, it is possible that this negativity reflects to the other environment as well. Even if it is impossible to copy the store to the other channel, managing the servicescape might enable the preservability of place attachment (Arsel et al. 2012). Therefore, the experiences created in both offline and online stores should be in-line with each other.

Then again, according to the results place attachment does not have an effect on switching intentions in the online retail context so perhaps the three dimensions is not a proper way to manage consumer's attachment to an online store. Managers of online stores could also focus on finding other ways to attract consumers to their stores than managers in the offline environment. However, as mentioned earlier in the second chapter the service provider is not always capable of managing place attachment as the consumers are the ones who create the meaning for the place (Johnstone 2012). The mission for the retailer is to provide the best possible servicescape for the consumers to create those meanings.

Interesting outcomes were found when comparing the four different stores and place attachment. Consumers who did their shopping in Ikea do not identify with the store as much as those consumers who did their shopping in Pentik. As Ikea is a major, global corporate and Pentik a small, domestic business it is no wonder that Pentik is capable of offering more valuable experiences to consumers. Pentik's segmented clientele finds it easy to identify with the store whereas Ikea's clientele buys mass production items, which cannot be so easy to identify with. Another factor that arises from the actions of Pentik is social bonds. Social bonds have a greater impact on the customers of Pentik than the customers of Stockman and Ikea. The management of Pentik should use these dimensions as a competitive advantage against major corporates. By creating experiences that customers can relate to and offering the possibility for interaction, Pentik is able to attach its customers more profoundly to the store.

When comparing the other three stores to Stockman, the store's current downfall situation seems justified. Consumers are not as dependent on Stockman

than they are on the other three stores, and they are more likely to switch to another provider from Stockman. It seems like Stockman is not able to offer the high quality and luxury that it used to be known for. As Stockman sells a lot of trademark products that can be bought from other stores as well, it is not so surprising that consumers are not that dependent on the store. Looking at Stockman's situation considering place attachment, it would seem that putting more effort on place identity could be the key to success. Creating memorable experiences and an environment that consumers can relate to could enable Stockman to thrive again.

5.3 Limitations and future research

This study had some limitations. The conceptual model utilized has not been used in a similar context. Though place attachment has been to some degree researched in commercial settings the amount of studies is little. In addition, place attachment in the online context is a relatively new idea, and to my knowledge there are no studies which have focused precisely on place attachment in the online environment. The items for social bonds could be categorized as commercial relationships as the connection between the retailer and the shopper was measured. However, Johnstone (2012) specifically noted that non-commercial relationships are better in triggering patronage intentions than commercial relationships. The support for the hypotheses regarding the differences between the offline and online environments are more focused on the actual differences in those stores rather than their differences in place attachment. The context of the study has to be kept in mind as well. Three out of four of the stores studied in this thesis mainly operate in Finland. Thus, there is no guarantee that similar results could be found in other countries.

Lee et al. (2012) noted that there may be difficulties with the place attachment's conceptualization utilized in this study. Because of the high correlation between place identity and place dependence, the results of the exploratory factor analysis were ignored. With support from the literature the confirmatory factor analysis gave the wanted outcome with four separate factors. One item from switching intentions had to be removed due to low measurability and only two items were then left to measure the factor.

There were also some limitations with the responses. The initial thought was to have equal amount of responses from both environments but in the end the offline context had around two-thirds of the responses. The amount of responses for the online context was proper but the results are still emphasizing the offline context. Also, the responses regarding the four stores were not even. Half of the respondents had done their latest shopping in Ikea and one-third in Stockman. This distribution affects the results in a way that decreases the meaning of the two smaller stores Pentik and Iittala.

Future research should still concentrate on studying place attachment in different commercial settings and finding out whether there are other outcomes that place attachment would have a greater impact on. In addition, this study focused on a negative outcome but future research could investigate the possible benefits that place attachment could have in the retail context. Place attachment could also be investigated solely in the online context, and obviously more thorough research is needed to find out about the differences in place attachment between the shopping environments. According to the results, place attachment does not have an effect on switching intentions in the online retail context, and therefore it gives a possible future research topic. Does place attachment have an effect on another behavioral outcome than switching intentions in the online context?

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APPENDIX 1: List of survey items in English

Place identity (Johnson et al. 2015)

[Place_ID1] I have a strong bond to this store as a place.

[Place_ID2] This store means a great deal to me.

[Place_ID3] I feel like the store and I have the same features.

Place dependence (Johnson et al. 2015)

[Place_DEP1] This store cannot be compared with any other store.

[Place_DEP2] I would not change my shopping in this store to any other store.

[Place_DEP3] It is important to me to do my shopping precisely in this store and not in any other store.

Social bonds / offline environment (Johnson et al. 2015)

[Social_BONDS1] This store keeps in contact with me.

[Social_BONDS2] This store knows me.

[Social_BONDS3] This store is interested in my needs.

[Social_BONDS4] It is important to me that I know this store well.

[Social_BONDS5] I feel like a part of a community in this store.

Social bonds / online environment (Johnson et al. 2015)

[Social_BONDS1] This online store keeps in contact with me.

[Social_BONDS2] This online store knows me.

[Social_BONDS3] This store is interested in my needs.

[Social_BONDS4] It is important to me that I know this online store well.

[Social_BONDS5] I feel like a part of a community in this store.

Switching intentions (Brocato et al. 2015)

[Switch_INT1] I am likely to switch and regularly visit another store.

[Switch_INT2] I might be convinced to regularly visit another service provider under the right conditions.

[Switch_INT3] There is no chance that I will switch and regularly visit a different store in the near future.*

Note: All items were measured using 7-point Likert scale (strongly disagree – strongly agree).

** item removed*

APPENDIX 2: Results of multiple comparisons between the stores

Tukey HSD					
Dependent Variable			Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Place Identity	Pentik	Iittala	0.17473	0.19141	0.798
		Stockman	0.41227	0.16853	0.069
		Ikea	0.51713**	0.15833	0.006**
	Iittala	Pentik	-0.17473	0.19141	0.798
		Stockman	0.23754	0.14899	0.382
		Ikea	0.3424	0.13734	0.062
	Stockman	Pentik	-0.41227	0.16853	0.069
		Iittala	-0.23754	0.14899	0.382
		Ikea	0.10486	0.1031	0.739
	Ikea	Pentik	-0.51713**	0.15833	0.006**
		Iittala	-0.3424	0.13734	0.062
		Stockmann	-0.10486	0.1031	0.739
Place Dependence	Pentik	Iittala	0.11151	0.19102	0.937
		Stockman	0.59749**	0.16819	0.002**
		Ikea	0.12936	0.15801	0.846
	Iittala	Pentik	-0.11151	0.19102	0.937
		Stockman	0.48598**	0.14869	0.006**
		Ikea	0.01786	0.13707	0.999
	Stockman	Pentik	-0.59749**	0.16819	0.002**
		Iittala	-0.48598**	0.14869	0.006**
		Ikea	-0.46812***	0.10289	0.000***
	Ikea	Pentik	-0.12936	0.15801	0.846
		Iittala	-0.01786	0.13707	0.999
		Stockman	0.46812***	0.10289	0.000***
Social Bonds	Pentik	Iittala	0.31764	0.19277	0.352
		Stockman	0.52851**	0.16973	0.010**
		Ikea	0.54968**	0.15945	0.003**
	Iittala	Pentik	-0.31764	0.19277	0.352
		Stockman	0.21087	0.15005	0.496
		Ikea	0.23203	0.13832	0.336
	Stockman	Pentik	-0.52851**	0.16973	0.010**
		Iittala	-0.21087	0.15005	0.496

		Ikea	0.02116	0.10383	0.997
	Ikea	Pentik	-0.54968**	0.15945	0.003**
		Iittala	-0.23203	0.13832	0.336
		Stockman	-0.02116	0.10383	0.997
Switching Intentions	Pentik	Iittala	-0.01513	0.1922	1.000
		Stockman	-0.61614**	0.16923	0.002**
		Ikea	-0.11131	0.15898	0.897
	Iittala	Pentik	0.01513	0.1922	1.000
		Stockman	-0.60100***	0.14961	0.000***
		Ikea	-0.09618	0.13791	0.898
	Stockman	Pentik	0.61614*	0.16923	0,002*
		Iittala	0.60100***	0.14961	0.000***
		Ikea	0.50482***	0.10352	0.000***
	Ikea	Pentik	0.11131	0.15898	0.897
		Iittala	0.09618	0.13791	0.898
		Stockman	-0.50482***	0.10352	0.000***

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$