

Does Shopping Preparation influence Consumer Buying Decisions?

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Abstract

Changes in consumers' environment, specifically the economic crisis and the growing penetration of digital technologies, have produced significant changes in shopping habits, designed to gradually reduced the effectiveness of in-store marketing levers in influencing shopping behaviour. On one hand, due to the global economic downturn and the associated diminished disposable income, more shoppers are now searching more information before entering a store and evaluating more alternatives before to decide where and what to shop. On the other hand, the deep penetration of technological developments, such as digital media and mobile devices, among the population, has opened up new opportunities to influence shopper attitudes and behaviour in the retail environment. A new scenario seems to be opening up where more planning and preparation for shopping is carried out before customers entering the store. In this new environment, to formulate and execute effective shopper marketing strategies, managers need to better understand the complete picture of how online, offline, mobile and in-store marketing influence shoppers in the path-to-purchase-and-beyond cycle. Starting from recent research avenues, our work intends to explore the relationship between pre-shopping behaviour and shopping behaviour in-store, with the aim to understand how pre-trip activities have influenced shopping behaviour in-store. In order to get this purpose, we conducted a survey in three stores belonging to a leading Italian grocery retailer. Shoppers were intercepted in front of the display, when the chosen product was placed in the shopping cart. Through a structured questionnaire, respondents were asked about the nature of the purchase (planned vs unplanned) and the degree of out-of-store preparation (number and type of activity carried out). Data were processed using SPSS statistical software. The degree of grocery shopping preparation is found to influence shopper behaviour inside the store in terms of planned/impulse buying: the higher is the degree of preparation, the greater is the tendency to plan purchases and the lower is the tendency to make impulse purchases. Our findings could suggest retailers and manufacturers new ways to innovate the practice of shopper marketing, considering that marketing levers cannot still affect consumers' decisions in-store as in the past.

Keywords: grocery retailing, in-store behavior, pre-trip activities, shopper marketing, shopping preparation

1. Introduction

In the last decade, the trade spending aimed to condition consumer behaviour in-store has considerably grown. Industrial companies have gradually shifted their strategic focus from a traditional marketing approach to a shopper marketing approach in the belief that in-store marketing levers are more effective than the traditional ones. At the same time, grocery retailers have invested increasing marketing resources in in-store promotions and marketing activities. The main idea is that it is possible to influence consumers' behaviors and decisions inside the store. According to many researches, the type of the food category purchased (Inman, Winer & Ferraro, 2009), the features of the shopping trip (Kollat & Willet, 1967; Bell, Corsten, & Knox, 2011) and the characteristics of the point of sales (Inman et al., 2009; Shankar & Muruganatham, 2013) could shape shoppers' decisions and stimulate purchases not planned before the shopping trip. In Italy, at least two out of three purchase decisions were made in store and this data would strengthen the growing strategic importance of the point of sale (Popai, 2012).

Today, otherwise, we face with a different scenario. The economic crisis has produced significant changes in shopper and consumer habits, designed to gradually reduce the effectiveness of in-store marketing levers. According to a recent research conducted on the Italian market by ShopperVista (IGD, 2012), 43% of consumers

always reads the flyers (compared to Europe, where the percentage is around 33), 29% redeems coupons (19% in Europe), 66% usually compares the price of single products (61% in Europe) and 59% of shoppers collect information before entering the store (compared with 51% of the rest of European consumers). This phenomenon is supported by the growing penetration of digital technologies. Consumers now are able to collect a large amount of information, to compare different retailers' offers and catch the best offer at the best price in a simple and fast way (Food Marketing Institute, 2012). Consumers are now planning their budget carefully, rely on a variety of information sources at all stages on the process.

In this new context, important questions are arising: what is the relationship between pre-shopping behaviour and in-store shopping behaviour? Can in-store marketing levers still influence consumers as generally assumed or their new planning attitudes limit the impact and the effectiveness of in-store shopper marketing levers?

Starting from these considerations, our work intends to explore the relationship between pre-shopping behaviour and shopping behaviour in-store, with the aim to understand which pre-trip activities are developed and how they influence impulse purchases. The paper is organized as follows. First, a literature review about consumer's decision making process and the influence on in-store marketing levers on purchasing behaviour is presented (par. 2). Secondly, we present the research questions (par. 3) and the methodology used (par. 4). We, then, present and discuss our findings (par. 5 and 6). Finally, last sections are devoted to conclusion and managerial implications (par. 7) and limitations and future direction (par. 8).

2. Theoretical Framework

The decision making process is a complex and long path characterized by different stages which take place both in and out of store (Puccinelli, Goodstein, Grewal, Price, Raghubir, & Stewart, 2009): it starts when consumer's needs emerge, goes on with information seeking and evaluation of different alternatives and ends up with purchase decision and post-purchase considerations.

Starting from the '90s, the marketing literature began to highlight the importance of shopping behaviour inside the store. Many researchers supported the idea that consumers' involvement with the store has not only a rational dimension, but also an emotional one (Hirschman & Holbrook 1982). In this context, the store started to be considered as a means of communication, an environment rich of sensory stimuli (Donovan, Rossiter, Marcolyn, & Nesdale, 1994), able to remember consumers' needs temporarily forgotten, suggest or stimulate latent needs, rather than stimulate new purchases or purchases not decided before the shopping trip (Inman et al., 2009).

The strand of literature which focuses on the influence of in-store marketing levers on shopping behaviour is known as "Shopper Marketing" and some authors have focused their attention on some specific marketing levers (Kahn & Schmittlein 1989; Chandon, Hutchinson, & Young, 2002; Inman & Winer, 1998; Sinha & Uniyal 2005; Larson, Bradlow, & Fader, 2005; Larson, Bradlow, & Fader, 2006; Neff, 2008; Chandon, Hutchinson, Bradlow, & Young, 2006; Inman et al., 2009; Dulrud & Jacobsen, 2009; Suher & Sorensen, 2010; ECR Europe, 2011; Bell, Corsten, & Knox, 2011). Several authors started to recognize that many decisions are not made until consumers enter the store (Agnew, 1987; McIntyre, 1995; Inman et al., 2009) and began to define and analyse the phenomenon of impulse buying.

Several are the definitions given to the concept of 'impulse buying' (Stern, 1962; Kollat & Willet, 1967; Bellenger, Robertson, & Hirschman, 1978; Cobb, 1986; Iyer & Ahlawat, 1987; Iyer, 1989; Bucklin & Lattin, 1991; Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998; Block & Morwitz, 1999). The most complete one seems to be the one which distinguishes impulse purchases into four categories (Iyer, 1989): pure impulse buying (purchases characterized by a complete absence of planning); suggestion impulse buying (which occur when the store suggests new product alternatives to meet a need); reminded impulse purchases (which occur when consumer remembers to buy a product that is needed only in front of the shelf) and planned impulse purchases (purchases partially planned before entering the store, e.g. the category has already been decided).

There are three main exogenous variables that have been recognized to affect the behaviour inside the store and the probability to buy on impulse: type of the food category, features of the shopping trip and characteristics of the point of sales. In particular, Inman, Winer & Ferraro (2009) have demonstrated that the higher the level of edonicity of the category bought and the longer the interpurchase cycle, the higher is the probability to buy on impulse. In the same way, the larger the number of items bought during the shopping trip and the larger the total amount spent, the higher is the probability to buy something not planned before (Kollat & Willet, 1976). Furthermore, a shopper is more likely to buy on impulse when the goal of the shopping trip is abstract (Bell et al., 2011), when the frequency of shopping is low (Kollat & Willet, 1976) and when the time spent in the store is high (Inman et al., 2009). Finally, impulse buying behavior depends on the quantity and quality of the space attributed to the category, on the display arrangement, in store communication, colors (Shankar &

Muruganantham, 2013), store atmosphere, service, store layout and in store promotion (Fam, Merrilees, Richard, Josza, & Li, 2011). The promotional lever, in particular, is managed with the aim to drive the purchase decisions inside the store to products not planned before (unplanned purchases) in order to modify both the composition and the amount of the shopping (Abratt & Goodey, 1990). In the same way, merchandising' lever is managed in order to stimulate unplanned purchases towards profitable products and/or categories (Inman et al., 2009). This means that both retailers and manufacturers could gain their profit target by managing instore marketing levers.

In a context where the unemployment rate grows, the family income decreases, the taxes incidence increases (Istat, 2013), consumers begin to adopt strategies to reduce the incidence of food expenditure (IGD, 2011). As described by IGD (2012), consumers are now much more prepared than in the past and collect information before the shopping trip about promotions, prices, products in order to reduce in-store impulsive purchases.

Shoppers recognize the ability of retailers to generate immediate desires and they try to limit this effect by activating some "self-control strategies", which are strategies oriented to control impulsiveness in order to be less conditioned by instore stimuli (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991; Cheema & Soman, 2006). In particular, in literature, two are the main activities that consumers realize in order to prevent deviant behaviour: reduction of desire and increase of willpower (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991; Cheema & Soman, 2006). Self-control is the result of a psychological conflict between desire and willpower, considered as the strategy used to reduce cravings. According to the psychological theory, conflict is an oscillation between a process driven by the impulse, largely irrational, that wants immediate gratification at any price, and a logical, rational process, which tends to postpone the rewards in the long run in order to get more benefits. The ability to maintain self-control and successfully take long-term decisions depends on the strength of these two opposing processes. If we consider the grocery context, there are two ways to control shopper impulsivity: define a mental budget to be followed during shopping expedition (Heat & Soll, 1996; Stilley, Inman, & Wakefield, 2010), and devote time to the preparation of the trip (Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987; Iyer & Ahlawat, 1987; Thomas & Garland, 1993; Thomas & Garland, 2004). According to Stilley, Inman, & Wakefield (2010) shoppers have a mental budget composed of two parts: a section dedicated to planned purchase and a part not assigned to any product in particular, in order to anticipate the possibility of making impulsive purchases. This happens because consumers are aware that they have neither the time nor the mental ability to plan everything, or because they want to have the possibility to spontaneously decide what to buy in the store. By defining a mental budget, consumers consider the purchase of products whose memory is stimulated in the store and get ready for the impulsive purchases, expecting to "deviate" from what has been planned. As regard shopping preparation, according to Block and Morwitz (1999), the presence of a written shopping list increases the probability to buy planned products. The shopping list is considered an "external memory aid" (Block & Morwitz, 1999) as it increases the probability of a correspondence between intentions and actions. Similarly, the fact of writing products on a list can help the memory of shoppers, even if they do not bring it during the trip.

The tendency of self-regulation is emphasized by the growing penetration of digital technology, which enables consumers to prepare the shopping expedition with different tools: digital shopping list, on-line price comparison, consultation of digital flyers and usage of apps. According to a global research made by IGD (2011), 61% of online consumers use the Internet to do research related to spending (about 45 % searches for grocery products information, 43% searches offers, 33% reads information relating to stores' promotions, 33% looks for on line coupons, 26% visits the brands website, 18% uses social network to give feedback about food products, 11% uses digital shopping list).

Because of the importance of the pre-trip activities, some authors began to review the definition of "Shopper Marketing" by considering it as a whole process which can affect consumers' decisions not only in-store, but also out-of-store when they develop a need to buy (Oxford Strategic Marketing 2008; Retail Commission on Shopper Marketing, 2010; Shankar, 2011; Shankar, Inman, Mantrala, Kelley, & Rizley, 2011). According to this perspective, Shopper Marketing could be defined as "the planning and execution of all marketing activities that influence a shopper along, and beyond, the entire path-to-purchase, from the point at which the motivation to shop first emerges through to purchase, consumption, repurchase, and recommendation" (Shankar, 2011). The main goal is to influence shoppers throughout the shopping cycle that comprises different stages such as motivations to shop, search, evaluation, category/brand/item selection, store choice, store navigation, purchase, repurchase and recommendation (Shankar, 2011). This means that decisions does not necessarily occur in store, in front of the display, but they can occur also out-of-store, during the pre-trip activities. For this reason, both retailers and manufacturers need to consider not only the behaviour inside the store, but also what consumers do before the shopping trip.

Considering that consumers who draw up a shopping list are less prone to being influenced by instore stimuli,

what future can we expect in a context where the shopper has many tools to collect information and plan the purchases before entering the store? How important are digital technologies in the Italian market in helping consumers to prepare the shopping trip? Does shopping preparation influence instore consumer behaviour?

These questions lead us to rethink about the traditional paradigm driving shopper behaviour instore and about the efficacy of all those marketing levers managed to influence consumers' choice instore.

3. Research Questions

Based on the considerations above, our work intends to explore the relationship between pre-shopping behaviour and shopping behaviour in-store in the Italian market. The aim is to understand how pre-trip activities have changed in the new market scenario and how they could influence in-store shopping behaviour.

Specifically, the present work intends to answer the following questions:

Q1 – What kind of pre-trip activities consumers carry out before entering the store?

Grocery shopping preparation is a self-control strategy which is adopted by consumers in order to limit impulse purchases (Iyer & Ahlawat, 1987; Thomas & Garland, 1993; Thomas & Garland, 2004; Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987). In the new market scenario, characterized by the presence of multiple tools - online and offline - which allow customers to collect information, it is interesting to investigate what kind and how many pre-trip activities consumers carry out in order to control their budget

Q2 – Does the grocery shopping preparation influence the shopping behaviour in-store?

Bettman (1979) stated that out-of-store collection of information has an impact on the degree of planned purchases. In the new context, it is interesting to understand to what extent the degree of pre-trip preparation influences in-store decisions in terms of planned versus unplanned purchases.

Q3 – To what extent the degree of preparation influences the ability to remember the price?

Price is one of the retailing mix levers which retailers managed mostly to influence purchasing decisions towards products not previously planned (Abratt & Goodney, 1990; Dickson & Sawyer, 1990). In those circumstances, it is interesting to understand to what extent the degree of preparation of shopping trip affects the ability to remember the price and, consequently, risks to reduce the effectiveness of promotional activities.

4. Methodology

In order to answer the above research questions, we used a single-stage mall-intercept survey method to collect data using a process similar to previous studies (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Sharma, Sivakumaran, & Marshall, 2010; Mohan, Sivakumaran, & Sharma, 2013). A leading Italian grocery retailer gave us the permission to conduct our survey in its stores. A broad set of categories was selected to cover planned versus unplanned shopping categories as defined by literature (Inman et al., 2009), on the hypothesis that shopper behavior varies among different categories.

Shoppers were intercepted in front of the display, when the product was placed in the shopping cart, and requested their participation in the survey. A total of 804 shoppers were interviewed. Overall, the convenience sample fairly represents the target population of urban adult Italian shoppers.

The interviews, based on a structured questionnaire, were aimed to measure the degree of preparation out of store. Having recorded the purchases made by each participant in the categories analyzed, we asked the shoppers whether each of these purchases was planned or unplanned. In case of planning, we asked them to indicate the degree of planning (they could have planned the brand, the product or the category) and the reasons (they could have planned the purchase for a need or for catching a promotional offer). In case of unplanned purchase, the consumers were asked to indicate the reason (presence of price-cut over the product or store environment influence). After that, the same sample was asked to list if and what kind of pre-trip activities he had done before the shopping expedition. In particular, five activities were considered, accordingly to previous market research (IGD, 2012): writing of a shopping list, examination of papyery flyer, examination of digital flyer, comparison of different stores' price using on line aggregator and flyers.

Data were processed using SPSS statistical software. The analysis tool used was the contingency table that allowed us testing the association between phenomena if at least one of them is measured on a nominal or ordinal scale. The chi-square test had been used in order to test the null hypothesis of absence of associations between them, at a .05 significant level.

5. Findings

5.1 Pre-trip Activities

In order to answer to the first question (Q1), the research investigated the number and the type of pre-trip activities carried out by the consumers.

The results show that 38 percent of consumers interviewed had prepared a written shopping list, 15 percent had read off-line flyer, 8 percent had read digital flyer before entering the shop, 21 percent had compared different stores' flyers and, finally, 6.5 percent had examined on-line aggregators.

Starting from these findings, we have identified three groups of shoppers, based on the number of pre-trip activities carried out before entering the store. The first group, called "not prepared shoppers", includes individuals who had not made any pre-trip activities (they only had a mental shopping list); the second group, called "prepared shoppers", refers to individuals who had made 1-2 pre-trip activities; finally, the "professional shoppers" (third group) are individuals who had made 3 or more pre-trip activities. The first group represents the 43 percent of the sample, the second the 48 percent and the third the 9 percent of the total number of individuals interviewed.

5.2 Degree of Shopping Preparation and In-store Behaviour

In order to answer to the second question (Q2), we explored shopping behaviour instore in terms of products search mode and reasons of purchase.

The statistical output (Table 1) shows the presence of a significant association between "degree of preparation" and "in-store behaviour" at a significance level of .001.

In particular, the results show differences between the "not prepared shoppers" and the others groups: the first seems to be more influenced by instore stimuli. 21.9% of "not prepared shoppers" have made impulse purchases (a higher percentage than the other two groups and almost double compared to those who perform more than three activities): they declared to have bought the products because they were attracted. Thus, the lower is the degree of preparation, the higher is the impulse tendency. In any way, their degree of planning is limited to the category. On the other hand, the "professionals" seem to have a deep knowledge about retail promotion since they had planned their purchases based on promotions (15.5% of them declared to have bought products because they knew they were in promotion). In sum, professionals are guided by promotion in planning their purchases and they are less influenced by instore stimuli.

Table 1. Degree of preparation In-store behaviour

			Contingency table_ Degree of preparation * In-store behavior						
			In-store behavior						Tot
			I've planned the purchase of a specific product	I've planned the purchase because I knew it was on promotion	I have bought the product on impulse, because of the promotion	I've planned the purchase of a specific brand	I've planned the purchase of a specific category	I have bought the product on impulse because I was attracted	
Degree of preparation	Not prepared	Number	141	6	24	30	70	76	347
		% of Degree of prep.	40.6%	1.7%	6.9%	8.6%	20.2%	21.9%	100.0%
		Std. resid.	-.6	-2.9	-1.1	.1	1.8	1.5	
Prepared	Prepared	Number	173	26	37	32	54	64	386
		% of Degree of prep.	44.8%	6.7%	9.6%	8.3%	14.0%	16.6%	100.0%
		Std. resid.	.6	1.2	.7	-.1	-1.1	-.8	
Professional	Professional	Number	31	11	8	6	7	8	71
		% of Degree of prep.	43.7%	15.5%	11.3%	8.5%	9.9%	11.3%	100.0%
		Std. resid.	.1	3.7	.8	.0	-1.3	-1.4	
Tot		Number	345	43	69	68	131	148	804
		% of Degree of prep.	42.9%	5.3%	8.6%	8.5%	16.3%	18.4%	100.0%

(Chi-square 37.739 p<.001; Phi .217 p<.001; V Cramer .157 p<.001)

5.3 Ability to Remember the Price of the Product

The last area of investigation has focused on the relationship between the degree of preparation and the ability to remember the price of the product(s) purchased (Q3). In order to investigate the ability to remember prices, subjects were asked to precisely indicate the reminded price of each product purchased (belonging to the category investigated). The price mentioned was, then, compared with the real price (directly detected in store) and it was calculated the percentage difference using the following formula:

$$(\text{remembered price} - \text{real price}) / (\text{real price})$$

In the case of multiple purchases within the category investigated, the value was calculated as a simple average of deviations of all the products. We considered the percentages obtained in absolute value. We collect this information for 616 shoppers.

The values obtained were classified into 4 groups based on the size of the deviation: the first group includes cases where no deviation is present (exact memory), the second one ranges from 0 to 5% (accurate memory), the third take into account the deviation from 5% to 30% (fairly accurate memory) while the fourth group includes deviations larger than the 30% (inaccurate memory).

In the sample analysed, the percentage of those who know exactly the real price of the purchased products is around 35%, while if we consider those who do not deviate, in absolute terms, more than 5% from the real price, the percentage rises to 56.8% (exact and accurate memory). The percentage of those who deviate more than 30% is equal to 12% (inaccurate memory).

It is interesting to understand if there are significant differences between the clusters identified (based on the degree of preparation) in terms of ability to remember the price. Despite the ability to remember may depend on various factors such as the visibility of the prices on the shelves, the time spent in front of the same and the cognitive abilities of each subject, we cannot reject the hypothesis of a relationship with the degree of preparation (p<.05) as shown in Table 2.

There is strong evidence that shoppers who realize more than 2 preparatory activities (professionals) have a greater capacity to remember the exact price of the product than the other two groups.

Table 2. Degree of preparation Ability to remember products' price

Contingency table – Degree of preparation * Ability to remember product's price							
Degree of preparation	Not prepared	Number	Ability to remember products' price				Tot
			Exact memory	Accurate memory	Fairly accurate memory	Inaccurate memory	
Degree of preparation	Not prepared	Number	84	53	86	27	250
		% of Degree of prep.	33.6%	21.2%	34.4%	10.8%	100.0%
		Std. Resid.	-.3	-.3	.3	.5	
	Prepared	Number	97	72	104	32	305
		% of Degree of prep.	31.8%	23.6%	34.1%	10.5%	100.0%
		Std. Resid.	-.9	.6	.2	.3	
	Professionals	Number	33	11	15	2	61
		% of Degree of prep.	54.1%	18.0%	24.6%	3.3%	100.0%
		Std. Resid.	2.6	-.7	-1.2	-1.6	
Tot	Number	214	136	205	61	616	
	% of Degree of prep.	34.7%	22.1%	33.3%	9.9%	100.0%	

(Chi-square 12.846 $p < .05$; Phi .144 $p < .05$; V Cramer .102 $p < .05$)

6. Discussion

Our research aimed to investigate the relationship between the degree of preparation and shopping behaviour instore in grocery retailing. Specifically, we have tried to explore how pre-trip activities could influence purchases decisions instore and the ability to remember the price. The findings bring out important considerations on the effectiveness of in-store marketing levers, managed by retailers with the aim to influence consumer decisions at the point of sale.

Firstly, the research highlights the presence of a prepared shopper, who looks for information by using different sources: more than half of the sample (57%) performs one or more activities before the shopping expedition and uses both on-line and off-line channels. Considering digital tools, only 8 percent of the sample had read digital flyer before entering the shop and only 6.5 percent had examined on-line aggregator. Comparing these data with the shoppers global tendency (IGD, 2012), we note that Italian consumers are less likely to use the technology for the shopping preparation. However, this data also means that there is space for digital technologies to grow in the Italian retailing market. The usage of technologies in the pre-shopping phase could help shoppers to make better decision and being less influenced by the environment while expending less effort inside the store. According to Haubl & Trifts (2000), the interactive tools designed to facilitate in-depth comparisons among alternatives in an online shopping environment may have positive effects on both the quality and the efficiency of purchase decisions.

The degree of grocery shopping preparation is found to influence shopper behaviour inside the store in terms of planned/impulse buying: the higher is the degree of preparation, the greater is the tendency to plan purchases and the lower is the tendency to make impulse purchases. Consumers tend to consider the promotion as a guide during the out-of-store preparation phase. This phenomenon is new in the in-store marketing framework where promotion was traditionally seen as a lever designed to stimulate impulse purchases inside the store (Abratt & Goodey, 1990; Dickson & Sawyer, 1990). Today, instead, the promotion is known out-of-store, mostly through off-line flyers, and it becomes a guide in-store: when consumers plan the purchase promotional products, the promotional lever risks losing its capability to generate impulse purchases.

The effectiveness of the promotional lever is likely to be questioned by another phenomenon, which is also a consequence of the degree of preparation: the ability to remember the price. The greater the degree of preparation out of store, the higher the consumer's ability to recall more accurately the prices of the products purchased. The research highlights the presence of an informed consumer, aware of the average price of retailers' assortments and able to evaluate the effective cheapness of promotional offers. In this research, the 34.7 percent of the sample was found to recall the exact price of the products just bought and the 56.8 percent to recall a price within the 5% of the real price. These results seem to be in line with the ones found in similar researches. Conover (1986) has suggested that about 50 percent of shoppers know the exact price of items they have purchased. In the same way, Dickson & Sawyer in 1990 found that 55.6% of the sample gave a price within 5% of the real price. But the innovative contribution of this study was to link the price recall accuracy with the pre shopping activities carried before the shopping trip. In fact, many studies (Monroe & Lee, 1999; Estelami &

Lehmann, 2001) have stressed that the factors that may influence price recall accuracy are product category used, respondent demographics, respondent psychographics and economic environment (e.g. inflation and unemployment).

In summary, the results of research show a new framework for the Shopper Marketing and, in general, for all marketing strategies aimed to influence shopper behaviour.

7. Conclusions and Managerial Implications

In the past, retailing marketing levers were managed primarily with the aim to influence consumer behaviour inside the store. Today, the growing importance of the preparatory activity and the amount of decisions planned before entering the store, lead companies to catch and influence consumers' decisions before entering the store.

Therefore, retailers need to assume a wider marketing perspective considering not only in-store behaviour, when the consumer is in front of the shelf, but also out of store, when purchasing needs emerge and consumers collect information to prepare the shopping expedition. Retailers and manufacturers have to evolve from focusing on "in-store" to all the stages in the shopping cycle, as suggested by recent literature (Shankar, 2011; St ¨alberg & Maila, 2012), recognizing that the key trigger points in the shopping cycle can occur both outside and inside the store.

We are facing with a phenomenon that questioning part of the traditional paradigms which had guided most studies on shopping behaviour and instore marketing. The store is no longer the only means of communication or information-seeking place, because the consumer is now able to evaluate the convenience of the retailers' offer by using a variety of sources. Thus, retailers and manufacturers have to evaluate how distributing marketing resources among different tools (online and off line). In particular, is important for market players to understand the importance of developing new applications and tools in order to help shoppers carrying out the activity of shopping preparation.

Finally, a new scenario seems to open up also for promotion. Our research shows that the 'professionals' use the promotion as a sort of guide in store (like a shopping list) for searching products and brands. Promotion, thus, risks losing its efficacy in influencing consumers' decisions instore and retailers have to find new ways to increase the amount of expenditure. For example, by using apps that allow the customization of promotions, they could meet the needs of consumers who are more prepared and informed.

As suggested by Shankar (2014), shopper marketing is entering a new era (the so called 2.0 phase) that will bring researchers and marketers to consider all the tools, online and offline, that can influence consumer choices along the different stages of the decision making process. Considering that not all decisions are made in the store, retailers and manufacturers have to redistribute resources between instore and out of store levers.

8. Originality, Limitations and Future research

Previous studies have focused on the in-store factors influence (Inman et al., 2009; Stillely et al., 2010; Mohan et al., 2013), while out-of-store factors have been considered only recently (Bell et al., 2011) and without specific reference to pre-trip activities in the digital context. Our study, thus, addresses this gap in the extant literature by studying the impact of preparatory activities on planned buying behaviour in the new market scenario by considering both on-line and off-line activities.

Despite these considerations, our research has some limitations associated with the store-intercepted survey research. First, respondents may have been influenced by the presence of interviewers and then distorted in order not to appear impulsive buyers. Second, our sample - interviewed in three regional stores - is probably neither truly random nor necessarily representative of any larger population. However, given our interest in relationships between variables rather than population descriptions, this may not be a relevant problem. Third, data could be analysed with more advanced tools. Nevertheless, this research wanted to be a first attempt to demonstrate the existence of a relationship between pre-shopping activities and instore behaviour.

Future research could consider demographic variables in order to understand how gender, age, country of origin and family composition influence the degree of preparation and the probability to buy on impulse. While some authors have established that gender, age and family composition may influence shopper's behaviour instore (Kollat & Willett, 1976; Blaylock & Smallwood, 1987; Cobb, 1986; Inman et al., 2009), nothing has been said about their impact on pre-shopping tendency.

Finally, it could be interesting to investigate how the relationship between out of store preparation and in store behaviour is related to store format. It has been demonstrated that shoppers prefer to visit hypermarket to conduct major trips while supermarkets are preferred for fill-in trips (Reutterer & Teller, 2009). At the same time,

the larger the number of items bought, the larger the total amount spent, the higher is the probability to buy something not planned before (Kollat & Willet, 1976). Shoppers recognize the ability of retailers to generate immediate desires and try to limit this effect (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991; Cheema & Soman, 2006). Considering these findings, we could expect a greater shopping preparation for consumers who shop at the hypermarket.

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