



Influencing online grocery innovation: Anti-choice as a trigger for activity fragmentation and multi-tasking



Ronan de Kervenoael^a, Jonathan Elms^{b,*}, Alan Hallsworth^c

^a Sabanci University, School of Management, Orhanli, Tuzla, 34956 Istanbul, Turkey

^b Institute for Retail Studies, Stirling Management School, Stirling University, Stirling FK9 4LA, United Kingdom

^c Portsmouth Business School, University of Portsmouth, Richmond Building, Portland Street, Portsmouth PO1 3DE, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 26 April 2014

Keywords:

Online grocery shopping
Activity fragmentation
Multitasking
Anti-choice

ABSTRACT

This paper reveals how activity fragmentation and multi-tasking become tools of consumer anti-choice in the online grocery sector: facilitated by new technology practices that positively encourage anti-choice. This is demonstrated through five long-term ethnographic case studies of households in the Portsmouth area of England. All the respondents made some form of conscious effort to minimize the amount of time they spent in 'big box' grocery stores. They spend more time at home in planning, searching, socializing online, cumulating and fulfilling internet orders than if they had visited a store: something that all could easily do. The findings suggest the need for constant innovation by internet grocers if they are to remain in tune with dynamic consumer lifestyles and advances in technology. Examples of upcoming technologies requiring retailers to re-think their internet strategies are discussed in view of the possibilities offered by activity fragmentation and multi-tasking.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Until recently, the UK online grocery market has been limited relative to levels of purchasing of non-food items via the internet. Market research findings now indicate that a growing proportion of the UK population – around 11–13% – regularly shop online for groceries (IGD, 2011). Market research studies suggest that the typical online shopper lives in a dual-income household and is between 25 and 34 years of age. They have children, have access to one or more cars, and live in suburban areas where physical access to supermarkets is not a problem. Such shoppers informed the market researchers that online grocery shopping easily enabled them to spend more time on other activities and offered them more convenient shopping (Mintel, 2011). We offer a different methodological perspective from such reporting of aggregated behaviors. We primarily stress the push factors driving some shoppers away from stores before considering technological pull.

Arguably, one reason why online grocery shopping developed more slowly than non-food is that food shopping involves purchasing of a basket of goods (Gronow and Warde, 2001) that may be both perishable and heterogeneous (De Kervenoael et al., 2006). Internet shopping for groceries poses very different challenges from online purchasing of standard items such as books, CDs and DVDs (Wrigley et al., 2002). Furthermore, food shopping is enmeshed in habits and in everyday routines, and intertwined within a nexus of related household practices – such as meal planning, preparation and cooking – all of which can now be mediated by technologies (Miller et al., 1998; Miller, 1998; Jackson et al., 2006). Social media, too, allow truly

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 01786467375.

E-mail addresses: dekervenoael@sabanciuniv.edu (R. de Kervenoael), j.r.elms@stir.ac.uk (J. Elms), alan.hallsworth@port.ac.uk (A. Hallsworth).

demand-led models to emerge such that consumers can more proactively decide what they buy and where: leading to further citizen empowerment (DBI&S, 2012). Blogs facilitate sharing of personal insights on food quality and suppliers (and disseminate information on food ‘scares’) whilst Apps can assist on topics from store finding to calorie counting: increasing food security.

1.1. Study aims

Drawing on in-depth case study analysis, the paper has two main aims. First, it seeks to show how, and why, local shopping opportunities can help to push consumers to actively engage with the internet for grocery shopping. We detect voluntary, active, resistance to the hegemonic ‘big box’ format in UK food retailing; the free-standing, car-based superstore. Complex new behaviors may be a manifestation of consumer choice abrogation, or positive ‘anti-choice’ (Hogg, 1998; Lee et al., 2011). Second, the paper uses five personal case studies to reveal how consumers’ online shopping practices become interwoven with the complex rhythms and domestic routines of everyday household life. Together, these trends pose new challenges for store-based retailers. Anti-choice behaviors are symptomatic of an incompatibility between retail stores and certain consumer lifestyles (Iyer and Muncy, 2009). At-store shopping is dissonant with, or antagonistic to, their beliefs and inclinations, choice sets and overall ideological views of the consumption process (Holt, 2002; Rojas-Méndez et al., 2008; Cherrier et al., 2011; Lee and Male, 2011). We also utilize the work of Banister and Hogg (Banister and Hogg, 2004) on symbolic consumption, self concept, self-esteem, self image and so on (Gronow, 2007; Higgins et al., 1994; Sirgy et al., 1997). Emotion-laden decisions over choice, non-choice or refusal are, we argue, routine aspects of everyday consumption practices and involve conflicting goals and objectives. Non-choice and anti-choice may result if available options are incompatible with one’s lifestyle choices and beliefs (Fischer and Hawkins, 1993; Hogg and Michell, 1996). Global and local food scares are driving opportunities for greater online supply chain and information transparency (Lloyd et al., 2006). Hogg states “*Anti choices included products and services which were positively not chosen because they were seen as incompatible and/or inconsistent (p 135) and (p 149) non choices were ...connected to a consumer’s ability to afford a particular product choice. ... abandonment avoidance and aversion each expressed different degrees of anti choice or ... refusal. ... of taste. Aversion was the strongest expression*” (Hogg, 1998).

The essence of non-choice lies with *conscious action*: the act of *not* buying an item or *not* using a service. Nowadays, many services involve conscious choices that mirror topics enumerated by Banister and Hogg (and others; above). Anti-choice has also been researched through studies of organized consumer boycotts. Within this complex milieu, we approach the topic of internet grocery shopping and show how anti-choice and resistance are enacted locally. Drawing on Peñaloza and Price’s (Penaloza and Price, 1993) seminal work, this growing field of research contributes to a deeper understanding of different consumption possibilities and thus provides an alternative view of what future consumption may involve. Consumption is characterized as “the process by which people acquire, use, and dispose of commodified goods (including ideas, services, products, brands, and experiences)” Lee et al. (Hogg, 1998, p. 11). Though research has begun to stress the importance of anti-choice or positive *non-consumption*, two major gaps in the online shopping literature remain.

Firstly, most anti-choice research covers behavior off-line and therefore more research is needed about how this links to online activity. We detect activity fragmentation and multi-tasking which have been categorized into four areas: audience, marketing, distribution and media channel. This is not just non-adoption of technology but a facilitator of positive non-consumption/rejection of available off-line choices (see *coping with change*, below). Secondly, the grocery literature, in particular, has overlooked anti-choice in favor of topics such as the supply chain, internationalization and pricing. Accordingly, everyday anti-choice has yet to be fully theorized and better linked to how future food consumption practices may develop.

The paper is structured as follows: we begin by providing a description of the broader backdrop to the present research. In the context of grocery shopping, a review of extant research from the social sciences focusing on the home/internet shopping interface is then presented. Here the relevance of the anti-choice literature is considered then, next, our methodological approach is briefly described and justified. Our five case studies focusing on consumers’ internet grocery shopping practices then follow. Empirical insights illustrate multi-tasking and activity fragmentation behaviors across different household situations and domestic circumstances. Finally, we conclude by discussing the implications of this study and suggestions for further research.

2. The research context: Portsmouth (1981–2006)

Research on ‘big box’ superstore shopping in the Portsmouth area commenced over 30 years ago when large grocery store formats were still new to the region. Early at-store research revealed who was shopping, how they reached the store, what they bought and what were their likes and dislikes (Hallsworth, 1981). This work has periodically been reinvestigated: most significantly in 2002–2006. In addition to revisiting those same stores, use of focus groups and individual household respondents was included: as reported in Clarke et al. (2006) and, especially, Jackson et al. (2006). Freestanding, car-based, stores now take around 75% of the total UK grocery trade (Elms et al., 2010) and, by 2006, just four major chains dominated – Tesco, ASDA/Wal-Mart, Sainsbury’s and Sainsbury’s – all included in the 2002–2006 studies.

Research revealed that consumers were alert to what their choice of store ‘says about them’ and they would abrogate apparently suitable store choices because of routines or preferences. Crucially for us, respondents made judgments, often

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1015465>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1015465>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)