Experiences in stores of the future: A combination of new and traditional values
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» Research areas: Consumer behavior, customer experience, design and organization of retail stores, retail digitalization

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What kind of experiences do future in-store customers want? What store aspects will be important?
Project 1. Consumers’ experiences in physical stores – a comparative study

» Two studies – conducted 2006 and 2016 – to enhance our understanding of how consumers’ in-store experiences are constituted (from consumers’ and retailers’ perspectives)

» *Critical incident technique*; consumers’ own descriptions of (positive and negative) in-store experiences

» Consumers of different ages, from different parts of Sweden (252 resp. 317 x 2)

» *In-depth interviews* with retailers from 7 retail firms (grocery, clothing, books, sports, home furnishing, home electronics)

(Bäckström & Johansson, 2017; 2006)
In-store experiences: Perspectives of the consumers

“I was immediately spotted by someone of the sales staff and she asked if she could help me. She was very knowledgeable in her area and not at all like in many other places where they only care about selling”. (Man, 59)

“I was ignored and had to wait for help in the store for a really long time. (...) I waited but finally gave up and left the store.” (Woman, 45)
Project 1: Conclusions

» Developing and using the competence of store personnel is an important challenge for retailers

» Retailers emphasize the importance of technological solutions – but there are few references to technology/multichannel retailing in the consumers’ statements

» In 2016 there is a large degree of congruence in consumers’ and retailers’ perspectives

» Despite the recent years developments within the retail sector - consumers’ experiences in physical stores to a large extent comprise the same aspects today as 10 years ago…
Project 2: Experiences in stores of the future

» The purpose of the study: To explore the role of physical stores today and in the future, from consumers’ point of view.

» Central questions: *What aspects of physical stores are valued by consumers? What new retail offerings are consumers seeking? What aspects of the store will be important in the future?*

» A pilot study; Focus groups (3 settings) with young consumers (5 women and 3 men, aged between 21-24)
1. To get (instant) hold of the product

- Touch, feel and try out products
- Immediate access to products
"A picture on a screen can never give me the feeling of actually trying it on"

Johanna
"As an impulse purchaser I want the product straight away!"

Jessica
"An app, where you would be able to get better insights into where you can find the product. In what store? That’s something that is missing today. There are solutions online but not in an app. So that you can easily see, in this city there are two stores that have this product. You can’t find it in that city, it’s out of stock. But it is possible to make an order and get it in that store… That kind of things."

Felix
2. The rational store visit

» Enabling quick store visit

» Making it easy to perform shopping tasks and complete the store visit …
“It must be very easy! You should be able to see what’s available.”

Johanna
"I want my store visits to be quick! I mean, I cannot just hang around in the store. "

Jessica
"Apple store has this system where you get a certain appointment, if there’s a queue. And then someone from the staff helps you and handles the payment at the same time. I think that’s supernice. (...) I mean, then you’re ready to go!"

Maria
Kristoffer: **Something that carries your goods** maybe, instead of the basket. (...) A robot or… well, I don’t know. (...) So that you can walk around, just picking up goods without having to carry them.

Felix: *But what about these rolling baskets?*

Kristoffer: *It’s still too hard.*
3. The personal interaction

» Personnel that is competent, knowledgeable, helpful…

» Personnel available for interaction – when the customer wants…

» Personnel with a developed understanding of how to handle customers/balance multiple aspects
"You should be able to ask the staff about anything, and they should give an answer. That’s why you go to the store! You go there because someone has better knowledge than yourself."

Felix
"When I tried them on (a pair of pants) they were being honest. They did not just care about selling, instead they suggested I should try a different model. I don’t like when they tell me it looks good, just to sell a pair of pants…"

Sara
"A service experience where I am actually on my own… The **only person that affects my decision is myself**… But at the same time there is always someone there to help me when I need it. I think it’s like this, **either they are too pushy or they are not there at all.** It’s rarely, in Sweden at least, something in between (...) **Not absent, not too intrusive. Someone who is there when you need it.**"

Felix
4. Technique vs. service

» Technological solutions that support and simplify (rather than entertain or engage)

» Technological solutions - not suitable for all contexts or all customers…

» Mobile shopping – smartphones transform service practices…
"As long as it is easier than going to the physical person, I would use technology."

Johanna
"At G-star they have placed an I-pad in the store… And I never would have stopped to use it! I mean, what am I supposed to do?"

Jessica
"In the vegetables section they could have a physical paper **recipes** or something like that. For example, close to avocados, recipes for avocado soup, avocado salad, and so on. That would have helped me a lot! But **I would have preferred physical papers.** In traditional ways. So I would not have to engage with some screen (...) **I don’t have time for that!**

Jessica
"It’s actually faster if I use my own phone. I mean, rather than trying to figure out their system…"

Johanna
"If you go to ICA or Coop, you can scan the products yourself (...) I think that’s really good. (...) And the cashier does not actually help you a lot (...) The staff that are on the store floor are those who are important. I would like to see a change where they have more staff in the store, offering their help. And remove all interactions at the check-out. No cashiers at all. Perhaps just two persons that could help if someone has problems. That would have been really great!"

Felix
Some concluding remarks...

» Physical stores will continue to play an important role for consumers also in the future

» Technological solutions are central – but traditional values will be a core component of consumers’ experiences also in the future

» Retailers need to revise how they organize/handle aspects such as personnel, layout, display of products...

» Central challenges; support and simplify, product availability, excellent service, personalization…
Thank you!

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