

SMARTPHONES AND THE RE-CONFIGURATION OF RETAILSCAPES



CHRISTIAN FUENTES
KRISTINA BÄCKSTRÖM
ANETTE SVINGSTED

MOBILE SHOPPING PROJECT

- Center for Retail Research, Lund University
- Christian Fuentes - Anette Svingstedt - Kristina Bäckström
- "Mobile shopping as Practice: A study of how young adults use their smartphones to shop"
- "Mobile shopping consequences: Empowerment and anxiety"
- "Smartphones and the reconfiguration of retailscapes: How smartphones are changing in-store shopping"

BACKGROUND

- Studies indicate that smartphones are now an integrated part of everyday shopping
- Consumers use smartphone for a number of shopping activities
- How do smartphones change the way we shop?

PREVIOUS MOBILE SHOPPING RESEARCH

- 1) Mobile technology acceptance
- 2) Drivers of mobile shopping
- 3) Consumers attitudes and reactions to mobile marketing

Missing: detailed studies of how this new practice of mobile shopping is performed and how it is different from previous forms of shopping

AIM AND APPROACH

- To examine how smartphones are changing *in-store* shopping
- ...and discuss the consequences of this for both consumers and retailers
- Practice theory and ethnographic method

SHOPPING PRACTICES AND RETAILSCAPE

- *Shopping as practice*: doings and sayings routinely performed and shared among consumers - involves competences, materials, meanings - broad definition of m-shopping
- Smartphones as active devices - shape practices and agency
- *Retailscape as performed space*: practices not only done in space but also perform that space - multiple and conflicting spaces can be performed

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

- 25 observations (length 1-2 hours) at shopping streets and shopping centers at Malmö, Helsingborg, and Gothenburg
- Various types of stores, for example, fashion, beauty, sports, home electronics, interior design, toys
- 14 interviews (9 women and 5 men). Informants aged between 20–71
- Face-to-face interviews – around 40 minutes

MOBILE SHOPPING AND THE RE- MAKING OF STORES

- In each instance/doing of mobile shopping the retailscape is both used and re-configured
- Each instance engages and activates some elements and makes new connections
- Re-configured informationscape - socialscape - experiencescape

RE-CONFIGURING INFORMATIONSCAPES

- Smartphones used to acquire (additional) information (reading up on products, checking availability, finding products in-store etc.)
- Smartphones used to create transparency (compare prices, read product/retailer reviews, sustainability information)

“When in IKEA I use my smartphone to check where I can find a certain product in the store and so I can go there directly. This is a way to be more efficient when shopping at IKEA”

-CONSUMER INTERVIEW WITH ANNA

“Occasionally I pick up the phone just to compare prices. In that case I use Price runner or something similar. That is if I know that it is a product that one can find in most stores”

-CONSUMER INTERVIEW WITH ALLAN

RE-CONFIGURING INFORMATIONSCAPES

- Enables consumers to become better informed
- Transforms the informationscape of the store - signs/
marketing material becomes less important - role of
service staff as information source is questioned

RE-CONFIGURING SOCIALSCAPES

- Social shopping at a distance (talking/texting with friends/partners)
- Getting shopping feedback from your social network (requesting advice via smartphones - chats, social media)

A woman is standing in the underwear section, browsing. Suddenly her phone rings. She picks up the phone and starts a conversation. They talk about the evening dinner. She leaves the underwear/lingerie section of the store and wanders around in the store while talking on her smartphone. She seems to have some problems holding the phone in one hand and the shopping bags in the other hand. To solve this problem she approaches a table displaying jeans, puts down her shopping bags and leans over the table continuing her conversation.

"I was in the fitting room with three outfits. I tried each on and sent a photo to my husband to get his opinion. This is a very convenient way for me as a mother of three to shop. This is a way for me to shop by myself and at the same time include my husband in my shopping.

-CONSUMER INTERVIEW WITH ANNA

RE-CONFIGURING SOCIALSCAPES

- Enables consumers to be social in new ways while shopping
- Changes how they interact with the physical environment, staff and other customers
- Consumers are not accessible and often distracted - social network more important than staff or store

RE-CONFIGURING EXPERIENCESCAPES

- To enhance the shopping experience
- To escape an unpleasant shopping experience
- Involves listening to music, playing games, checking social media etc.

"Sometimes listening to music while shopping is a way for me to create some peace of mind/serenity that I need when being on a shopping trip"

-CONSUMER INTERVIEW WITH CLARY

“Interviewer: Do you often have your phone in your hand when shopping?”

Informant: I often do! But it is mainly because of my girlfriend, I often find it tiresome to look at her clothes so I check my phone instead / Mainly social media then / I let her browse on her own and I sit down with my phone somewhere”

–CONSUMER INTERVIEW WITH ALLAN

RE-CONFIGURING EXPERIENCESCAPES

- Enables consumers to personalize the retailscape - to go against the script of the store
- Enables consumers to manage the unpleasant aspects of shopping
- Changes how they interact with retailscape - difficult for service staff to interact - use the store differently

THE PROVISIONING OF SERVICE

- The changing informationscape, socialscape, and experiencescape - shaping the provisioning of service
- Affects both self-service (provided by the physical store) and personal service (provided by staff)

SMARTPHONES AS SELF-SERVICE DEVICES AND CO-AGENTS

- Enables consumers to re-configure the retailscape and engage in a new form of digitally enabled self-service
- Consumers take over many of the tasks of stores and staff
- Smartphone becomes an important actor - changes the agency of consumers and becomes a mediator between consumers and retailers

CONCLUSIONS

- Equipped with smartphones - consumers agency changes
- Can manipulate the retailscape in new ways - go against the script of the stores
- This leads to the making of multiple overlapping and interacting retailscapes - which in turn not always align with the design and organization of stores

QUESTIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- How are stores to be designed and organized to enable/adapt to mobile shopping?
- How is staff to be trained to provide service? What is their role?
- How can retailers adapt to this new emerging practice?

QUESTIONS?

christian.fuentes@ism.lu.se



WORKSHOP

1. How do smartphones change shopping practice?
2. What are the positive and negative consequences of mobile shopping for consumers?
3. What are the opportunities and challenges that mobile shopping involves from a retailers point of view?