

Chapter 11

Conceptualization and Measurement of Smart Shopping

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to critically review current studies on “smart shopping” with the aim of improving the understanding of this phenomenon and suggesting future lines of research. The authors present a pioneering classification of international research on smart shopping published in the last 30 years that provides a comprehensive overview of existing knowledge. They categorize smart shoppers’ traits and develop a thorough analysis of existing measurement scales, data collection methods, product categories and countries that have been objects of prior studies. Their findings highlight the need to develop cross-cultural models that consider the affective and behavioral dimensions of smart shoppers from different countries to help academics and practitioners better identify and target this customer segment.

INTRODUCTION

Deal hunting has become an integral part of daily life for millions of consumers who seek lower costs but are also interested in maximizing the benefits associated with the shopping experience (Atkins, Kumar, & Kim, 2016). The term “smart shopper” describes consumers who invest considerable effort in searching and utilizing promotion-related information to make the best possible purchase (Mano & Elliott, 1997). Unlike price-conscious consumers who focus exclusively on paying low prices (Lichtenstein, Ridgway, & Netemeyer, 1993), smart shoppers seek price and time savings, as well as self-expression benefits (Atkins

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7856-7.ch011

& Kim, 2012; Bicen & Madhavaram, 2013; Chandon, Wansink, & Laurent, 2000; Schindler, 1998). For these shoppers, getting a good deal is a source of ego-related positive emotions, such as a sense of pride and accomplishment (Schindler, 1998). Thus, smart shoppers capitalize on the advantageous purchase opportunities available to them in the marketplace and take pride in their decision-making capabilities (Burton, Lichtenstein, Netemeyer, & Garretson, 1998).

This customer segment has attracted the interest of marketing practitioners because the self-perceptions of smart shoppers have been found to influence brand attitude (Garretson et al., 2002; Liu & Wang, 2008; Manzur, Olavarrieta, Hidalgo, Farías, & Uribe, 2011), willingness to buy (Chung & Darke, 2006), promotion proneness (Chandon et al., 2000; Labbé-Pinlon, Lombart, & Louis, 2011) and word-of-mouth communication (Bicen & Madhavaram, 2013; Chung & Darke, 2006).

Although the term smart shopping can be frequently observed on television, in magazines, and on the Internet (Atkins & Hyun, 2016), research related to this topic is rather scarce. The authors of this chapter have performed an extensive review of international academic literature on marketing and psychology with the dual aim of critically reviewing all previous references relevant to smart shopping and improving current understanding of this phenomenon.

To address these objectives, this chapter begins with a discussion of the methodology used to undertake the literature review. The second section analyses the existing definitions of the smart shopping concept. The following section develops the first categorization of previous studies on this topic. Then, a thorough analysis of existing measurement scales is detailed. The conclusion section presents the contributions and limitations of the study and suggests further research lines.

Methodology

To critically review all previous references related to smart shopping, this study performed a broad search of all academic literature on this topic published in the last 30 years by examining online databases as well as reference lists of articles. The search was undertaken directly on the Science Direct, JStor, Emerald, Wiley, Sage, Routledge, and Prentice-Hall websites as well as in other relevant catalogues. The relevant articles were identified using the following specific key words: “smart shopper”, “smart shopping”, “deal-prone consumers”, “smart buy”, “smart purchase”, “deal hunt”, “smart shopper feeling”, “smart shopper self-perception” and “consumer internal reward”. For a taxonomy of the articles, a database in Microsoft Excel was developed to facilitate further analysis. After careful consideration and selection, core articles to be included in this review were shortlisted based on the empirical nature of the publications. The final sample included 17 empirical articles that were analysed for their content and categorised according to two criteria: (1) whether or not smart shoppers are the focus of the study and (2) the key object of analysis (smart-shopper feelings or smart shopper-attributed behaviour). Section 3 describes the resulting categorization.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SMART SHOPPING

“Smart shopping” is generally associated with the purchase process followed by smart shoppers (Labbé-Pinlon et al., 2011), but it is rarely defined in an explicit manner. In an exception, Mano and Elliott (1997) describe smart shopping as “a tendency for consumers to invest considerable time and effort in seeking and utilizing promotion-related information to achieve price savings” (p. 504). According to

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