

# The shopper's path-to-purchase is paved with digital opportunities: An overview of technologies to augment the shopping experience

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## SUMMARY

Retailing, and especially grocery retailing, is a self-service business context par excellence. In order for the customer's service experience to be successful, the main prerequisite is that the store enables the customer to get his/her goal accomplished (i.e., shopping as 'work' and/or for 'fun' – extrinsic, utilitarian versus intrinsic, more hedonic shopping motives; cf. Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994). There is however more needed to survive in today's competitive and rather mature retail context. Retailers, manufacturers and scholars focus ever more on shopper marketing (Shankar, 2011), targeting the shopper ubiquitously, along and beyond the entire path-to-purchase, in a multichannel, multimedia environment (cf. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 2010, 24 (2), special issue).

Despite the merits of electronic and mobile commerce, it is however unlikely that traditional bricks-and-mortar retail settings will disappear; rather both channels will complement each other in satisfying shopper needs (Zhang *et al.*, 2010). Nevertheless, a proper strategic response is needed in order for offline retailing to sustain its role. In comparison to the wealth of data on which online retailers can rely, things are generally quite different for traditional retailers. As such, the creation and management of marketing intelligence in function of shopper marketing initiatives can be considered a top strategic priority for the latter.

In this vein, the present study focuses in particular on innovative ways to digitally augment the *servicescape* (Bitner, 1992) offered by the bricks-and-mortar retailer. In the present digital era, technological developments allow on the one hand for **augmenting and optimizing the shopping experience** by amplifying the interactivity of customer relationships (cf. e.g.,

Krüger, Schöning, & Olivier, 2011). *Instrumented servicescapes*, on the other hand, also have the potential of **capturing moments-of-truth along the shopper's path-to-purchase**. Our literature review reveals that there is a lack of a conceptual reference framework for identifying and verifying the suitability new technologies to in-store marketing, leading to (1) missed opportunities to set up communication with the customer and (2) a mismatch of technologies used and the marketing goals that are in need of support (e.g., other shopper objectives are to be supported in a grocery store than in a rather hedonic oriented store).

In particular, this article provides an encompassing inventory of cutting-edge technologies being devised over the past few years that allow for retailers to succeed in their quest to capture the consumer's interest. This inventory is drawn up by combining the (shopper) marketing literature with publications and achievements in the field of ICT for retailing. Our study considers publications that stem from the intersection of marketing sciences and computer science as well as working papers from applied retail labs and retail R&D departments.

Two perspectives will prevail in the presentation of this in-store technologies inventory. First, to optimize managerial relevance of the overview, the existing **technological possibilities** and innovations in development for pervasive computing in retailing are **mapped systematically onto the different composing stages in the shopping cycle** (Shankar, 2011), reflecting (1) the stage in which they are most powerful to be of influence and (2) the type(s) of customer value that they contribute to (Holbrook, 1999; Salo, Olsson, Makkonen, Hautamäki, & Frank, 2013). For

example, while face recognition technology may serve in creating appropriate **need recognition** (e.g., OptimEyes applied by the UK grocery retail chain Tesco), QR codes can be argued to rather target the customer engaged in the **information search** process (Atkinson, 2013), and location-based mobile ads can be expected to primarily activate a certain brand **consideration set** (Shankar, Venkatesh, Hofacker, & Naik, 2010). As such, this informed inventory aims to serve well-formulated shopper marketing objectives.

Second, in the benefit of advancing shopper marketing research, this study adds to the existing knowhow on the use of (some of) these technologies in order to **gain shopper**

**insights at the point-of-sale.** For example, what is the current state of (knowledge in the) application of observation techniques like eye-tracking (cf. e.g., Hui, Huang, Suher, & Inman, 2013) and what about using shoppers' mobile phones as sensing platform for emotions, activities and interactions along and beyond the path-to-purchase (cf. e.g., Rachuri *et al.*, 2010)? The article concludes with a **research agenda**, comprising both conceptual questions to inspire future shopper marketing research as well as methodological considerations and best practices in researching the topic of digitally augmented shopping experiences.

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## **Online vs. offline channels?**

### **Testing the effect of promotional communication on shopper behavior**

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## **SUMMARY**

The retail landscape has changed dramatically in recent years. The growth and importance of the online channel has created different shopping patterns, varied customer experiences, and has impacted on customer decision making in significant ways. New digital channels and customer touch points continue to have a strong impact on retailers, brand manufacturers and customers. Consumers increasingly use multiple channels (Kushwaha and Shankar, 2008). Retailers are called to review their strategies in a multichannel perspective, including communication and promotional strategies. New questions arise, such as: How can firms influence the buying process of customers through multiple

channels? How does the use of multiple communication channels affect customer experiences?

Answers to these questions require insight into the comparative effects of traditional and new channels, as more and more retail activities are moved online. Such is the case of the promotional flyer that is quickly turning digital. The promotional flyer is a printed means of weekly/monthly communication for retailers, distributed both in store and out of store and employed to communicate deals and retailer image (Miranda and Kónya, 2007, Urbany *et al.*, 2000). Manufacturers advertise in store flyers to achieve point-of-sale communications and a