

Educating consumers for increased profit or offering consumer value - An investigation on consumer attitudes toward QR-codes

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Retail executives are adapting their brick-and-mortar stores to bring technology in, and together with service performance, deliver better customer value. Shifts in technology and consumer behaviour are often compelling retailers and shopping centre landlords to increase the innovation stakes. However, retailers innovate in a different way compared to traditional innovation intense sectors (Sundström & Radon, 2014). Retailers are often left with the “feeling” of why something works and why something else does not. The nature of retailing innovation is according to several studies insufficiently researched (Reynolds & Hristov, 2009; Tether, 2005; Miles, 2000) and innovation is mainly focused on technology, leaving retail innovation aside. As Reynolds et al (2007) state “*in measuring innovation, we tend to fall back upon easily derived metrics – such as number of patents, or levels of R&D spending*” (p. 649). There is hence a need for new perspectives on what consumers’ value as basis for innovation, and develop new business models based on technology that bring value to the consumer.

Technologies developed over the past 20 years have changed the way buyers execute their responsibilities with advancements in various technologies; faster transmission of data results in the ability of buyers to immediately react to inventory and pricing issues (Fiorito et al., 2010). Information communication technologies used in retail settings are beginning to focus on services that help shoppers plan their trip, often in terms of mobile apps and interactive dialogue services (Retail Week, 2014). However, given that technology investments can exceed millions of dollars, and that many retailers' margins and inventory productivity have been eroding over the last ten years, the stakes for information technology decisions have grown exponentially, so care must be taken in making these decisions (ibid). An easy and affordable alternative for these organisations could be to implement the technology of Quick Response Codes (QR codes). The QR code was designed to allow its contents to be decoded at high speed (Jupiter, 2011). Its purpose was first to track vehicles during manufacture; it was designed to allow high-speed component scanning (Furth, 2011). Several retail companies use mobile marketing and for instance QR codes, e.g. Uniqlo, Topshop, Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, and H&M as one channel for their communication strategies to create both good customer relationships and engagement in the brand.

The use of mobile devices for communication with consumers has become a strategy to, for example, support consumer relationships and it is important, not only to view the retail side of

for instance investment decisions regarding mobile communication but also the value of this for the consumer. This paper investigates consumer attitudes toward using mobile devices in a retail setting, with specific focus on QR-codes. The data consists of 150 in-store surveys conducted at two different retailers. The results of the empirical material show significant differences between age groups with regard to how they value QR-codes but also what would make them actually use one. While the consumer group of 40-years old and upward expressed that they would pick up their mobile phone and scan the QR-code given a discount, the younger group (up to 40 years old) did not value a discount but would scan a QR-code if there was entertainment value in doing so. Except from these differences the material also reveals a low knowledge of QR-codes and that the actual use of them is also low. These results, in light of, the increased attention from retailers in using mobile devices for communicating with consumers, as well as investing in other digital aids in order to increase profits, show discrepancies in perceived value of digital aids on the part of the retailer and the value experienced by the consumer.

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