

THE MEDIATISATION OF SHOPPING: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING AND STUDYING HOW SHOPPERS USE APPS IN RETAIL ENVIRONMENTS.

Extended abstract submitted to the 2014 NRW

Benjamin Hartmann, PhD
Benjamin.hartmann@jibs.hj.se
Jönköping International Business School

Hamid Jafari
hamid.jafari@jibs.hj.se
Jönköping International Business School

Mart Ots, PhD
mart.ots@jibs.hj.se
+46-739740074
Jönköping International Business School

Introduction

This presentation offers a conceptual framework for studying and theorizing how the use of retailers' mobile applications (apps) influences shoppers' in-store experiences. It reports on the latest conceptual developments of a project sponsored by HUR to contribute to ongoing debates on the increasingly important role of mobile media for in-store shopping, shaping both customer behavior and retail business models (Hennig Thurau et al., 2010).

Although the role of mobile marketing innovations for customer's in-store experiences has been noted as an area of particular interest (Shankar et al., 2010) and IBM predicted that the integration of physical store environments and mobile technologies may well be one of the biggest innovations in the coming 5 years (Takahashi, 2013) there are conceptual blind spots with regards to how the integration between the physical and 'mediatised' shopping experience that the consumption of digital media facilitates can be understood.

Background

Shopping will be neither be entirely digital nor entirely analog. Increasingly, we witness that e-retailers open physical showroom and warehouse stores, but also traditional retailers use digital media to create an enhanced shopping experience for their customers in both practical and emotional sense. However, theorizations on how digital media environment (apps) act as an extension of the physical store environment and vice versa are notably absent.

Empirically, Sweden has recently been undergoing a dramatic increase in the use of smartphones. 73 % of consumers currently own a smartphone, of which 17 % have used it in their shopping during the past year (e- Survey, 2013). Shoppers use their smartphones for a variety of activities such as creating shopping lists, search for products and prices, ask questions to retailers, compare products, receive coupons, make purchases, or to immerse yourself in expanded services and experiences after the purchase is completed (Im and Ha, 2013; Shankar et al. , 2010; Dickinger and Kleijnen, 2008; Kim and Forsythe, 2008).

Thus, shopping increasingly becomes 'mediatized' when shoppers are taking help of mobile digital services to plan and implement their purchasing activities However, relatively little is

understood about the mediatization of shopping and the transformations and augmentations of shopping experiences it induces.

Developing a Conceptual Framework for Mediatized Shopping

Mediatization

The concept of mediatization is used to describe a society in which our lives are increasingly lived through and through media (Giddens 1984; Thompson, 1995; Schultz 2004). Increasingly, everyday activities and interactions with other people are performed by using digital media. Deuze (2012) discusses how people today find it difficult to distinguish the use of media as a separate activity. In particular, the proliferation of smartphone adoption implies that digital services can be accessed and integrated easily within practices of everyday living. This means that digital media can no longer be regarded as a separate technology, but rather as an integral part of social institutions, such as our culture, our work and our family life (Hjarvard 2008).

Although an explicit focus on retailing is notably absent in previous literatures, shopping habits are very much a social institution subject to increased mediatization. This links to the question of how the use of smartphones and apps affects shopping and related experiences, but it also places questions on how the field of retailing can rethink established notions of store layout, in-store service, and merchandising.

Practice theory

To conceptualize the mediatization of shopping specifically, the mobilization of a practice-theoretical perspective (Schatzki 1996; 2001) is useful. While previous literature has focused exclusively either on the things that shoppers do when shopping (doings), the diffusion of media technologies (objects), or shoppers' attitudes towards the use of media technologies for shopping (meanings), a practice theoretical perspective integrates these perspectives by looking at the intersection of doings-objects-meanings and the role of smartphone apps in the arrangement of this tripartite structure.

A practice-theoretical approach emphasizes how the conduct and enactment of everyday activities is guided by routine practices and implicit know-how and rules. Thus, shopping is a bundle of bodily routines and skills, explicit or implicit rules, understandings, and material arrangements, guided by teleoaffective structures (what is aspired and why).

Shopping involves 'doings': Practices encompass routinized bodily, mental, and emotional activities. In this light, shopping emerges as a set of activity encompassing certain behavioural and mental patterns, know-how, competences, and certain aims and emotions.

Shopping involves 'objects': Objects are necessary elements in practices. Carrying out a particular practice oftentimes involves using particular objects in particular ways. Therefore, objects are resources for carrying out practices. Thus, smartphones and apps are relevant objects in and for the conduct of shopping.

Shopping involves 'meanings': Meanings arise from within the context of a practice. For example, objects gain meaning in the light of the practice. But practices also produce meaning for their carriers. It is through participation in practices that individuals develop a sense of the world and the self.

Mediatized shopping

Thus, shopping surfaces as the intersection of doings, objects, and meanings which integrate in routinized patterns of sets of activities. This conceptualization of shopping allows tracing the integration, role, and consequences of apps for the conduct of shopping, i.e., mediatization.

On this basis, the presentation develops a conceptual frame for understanding and studying the mediatization of shopping and offers a discussion of important theoretical and practical implications to the field of retailing.

References

- DEUZE, M. 2012. Media life, Polity.
- DICKINGER, A. & KLEIJNEN, M. 2008. Coupons going wireless: determinants of consumer intentions to redeem mobile coupons. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 22, 23-39.
- GIDDENS, A. 1984. *The constitution of society: introduction of the theory of structuration*, Univ of California Press.
- HENNIG-THURAU, T., MALTHOUSE, E. C., FRIEGE, C., GENSLER, S., LOBSCHAT, L., RANGASWAMY, A. & SKIERA, B. 2010. The impact of new media on customer relationships. *Journal of Service Research*, 13, 311-330.
- HJARVARD, S. 2008. The mediatization of religion: A theory of the media as agents of religious change. *Northern Lights: Film and Media Studies Yearbook*, 6, 9-26.
- IM, H. & HA, Y. 2013. Enablers and inhibitors of permission-based marketing: A case of mobile coupons. *Journal of Retailing & Consumer Services*, 20, 495-503.
- KIM, J. & FORSYTHE, S. 2008. Adoption of Virtual Try-on technology for online apparel shopping. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 22, 45-59.
- SCHATZKI, T. R. 1996. *Social practices: A Wittgensteinian approach to human activity and the social*, Cambridge University Press.
- SCHATZKI, T. R. 2001. Practice mind-ed orders. *The practice turn in contemporary theory*, 42-55.
- SCHULZ, W. 2004. Reconstructing mediatization as an analytical concept. *European journal of communication*, 19, 87-101.
- SHANKAR, V., VENKATESH, A., HOFACKER, C. & NAIK, P. 2010. Mobile marketing in the retailing environment: current insights and future research avenues. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 24, 111-120.
- THOMPSON, J. B. 1995. *"The" Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*, Stanford University Press.
- TAKAHASHI, D. (16 dec 2013) IBM reveals its top five innovation predictions for the next five years, retrieved from <http://venturebeat.com/2013/12/16/ibm-reveals-its-top-fivepredictions-for-the-next-five-years/>