

## **The use of shopping lists by Generation Y consumers in grocery shopping**

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### **Extended Abstract**

Grocery shopping is one of the most an important part of daily life. According to a Market Brief by the Swedish Chambers, in 2009 Swedish consumers spent about 20% of their household budget on food and beverages (Swedish Chambers, 2011). Not only does grocery shopping require financial resources, it also takes time and effort. To assist consumers to achieve their goals and make their grocery shopping trip efficient, they plan their shopping trip prior to undertaking it. Part of planning may result in creating a shopping list that helps to direct the actual grocery purchase.

Previous research has been conducted into the use of shopping lists in New Zealand (Thomas & Garland, 2004; Thomas & Garland, 1996; Thomas & Garland, 1993) and the USA (Block & Morwitz, 1999; Spiggle, 1987) and Denmark (Schmidt, 2012) but despite the importance of planning and shopping lists there is little published research into their use. Their use among Generation Y consumers is also largely unknown and has not been researched.

Generation Y's members are driven by different values than the other generations (Noble, Haytko & Phillips, 2009). Generation Y is considered to be highly active in the marketplace as they are the current and future consumers (Noble et al. 2009). Generation Y frequently shops for groceries. A U.S. national survey of 1,251 Gen Y'ers showed that 6 percent makes daily grocery purchases, 25 percent goes twice a week to the grocery store and 40 percent goes at least weekly (Lachman & Brett, 2013). The weekly shopping trip for Generation Y is a mix of trips to farmers' markets and specialty food stores where they buy their groceries at mass retailers, drug stores and, increasingly, online retailers (Orsini, 2012). Hoffman (2012) explains that Generation Y prefers to purchase cheaper food but at the same time Generation Y is also more willing to pay for fresh and healthy food.

Shopping lists can serve a number of purposes. They can act as a script so as to make efficient use of the time in the store (Thomas & Garland, 1996; Iyer & Ahlawat, 1987). They can also serve as memory aids, specifically an external memory aid to remind the consumer to purchase items (Thomas & Garland, 2004; Block & Morwitz, 1999). A shopping list is also an indication of pre-shopping planning (Thomas & Garland, 2004; Thomas & Garland, 1996; Polegato &

Zaichkowsky, 1994). It has been suggested that consumers use a shopping list to control their expenditure and to make sure that they do not buy more items than planned, and in so doing, do not exceed their budget (Thomas & Garland, 2004; Block & Morwitz, 1999). For families, a shopping list can be a way for the family to function efficiently, making it a management tool (Polegato & Zaichkowsky, 1994). It also serves as a simplification strategy for grocery purchasers, giving shopping activities an order (Arnould et al., 2000, cited in Thomas & Garland, 2004). Finally, a list can also assist consumers to stay within their shopping plans, and not be distracted by anything that could interfere, giving the list a goal achievement purpose (Inman, Winer & Ferraro, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to understand and explain the reasons behind the usage of shopping lists by Generation Y consumers and the affect it has on Generation Y consumers in store.

Use was made of a qualitative approach in this research which enabled the researchers to find insight information with regard to the shopping behaviours of Generation Y. In total, the authors conducted 29 personal semi-structured interviews with Generation Y consumers. The interviews were held at the supermarkets, university or at the participants' house.

The findings show that Generation Y consumers use shopping lists to remind, plan and save money. While Generation Y consumers are technological-savvy it enhances the ease of using shopping lists through mobile applications, yet the majority continue to use paper-based shopping lists. The shopping list enables Generation Y consumers to reduce unplanned purchase, time and cost in store. They use the list as a map to structure their shopping trip and therefore do not waste time going back and forth to the same section of the store; while some others use it only to pick up the items they need and not losing time thinking of what to purchase in the store. The outcome of shopping list usage is similar to shoppers who were the focus of previous studies, which leads the authors to conclude that Generation Y consumers are similar to any other shoppers.

This research can affect the way in which retailers encourage Generation Y shoppers to formulate their lists (through brochures and mobile applications) as well as the way in which the lists are used in the store (through the use of in-store cues) to encourage Generation Y consumers to spend more time in store.

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