

Shopper Marketing: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT: Shopper marketing is a recent concept and it has been gaining importance and attention among managers and researchers. Due to its youth and increasing relevance, the purpose of this paper is to analyze, categorize, compile and analyze the existing knowledge concerning shopper marketing. The main finding of this paper is that the literature on shopper marketing is complementary and coherent, and also raises several research and managerial challenges. Besides that, there is a structural common trace on the literature, recognizing that shoppers are citizens with specific needs beyond consumption, which should be effectively analyzed and satisfied, adopting a shopper marketing approach. The main contributions provided are the compilation of shopper marketing literature, its analysis and the identification of major issues and directions for future research.

Keywords: shopper marketing; in-store marketing; literature review

JEL Classifications: M30; M31

1. Introduction

Since the last decade there have been profound changes in shoppers' behavior due to changes in the technological and business landscape, such as the emergence of new shopping tools - e.g., ability to search for product and pricing information anywhere at any time, outside or inside the store (Marketing Science Institute, 2010). Among other factors, those changes led to an increasing importance of the point-of-purchase (POP) on marketing management activities (Gilbride et al., 2013). Besides that, several studies confirm that a significant proportion of purchase decisions are made in store (Hui et al., 2013a; Hui et al., 2013b; Knox et al., 2011; Ashley et al., 2011; Chandon et al., 2009; Inman et al., 2004; Inman et al., 2009; Bucklin and Lattin, 1991), meaning that the influence of POP stimuli and environment can be a very important factor, particularly in impulse and unplanned purchases (Mohan et al., 2013). All those factors urged a marketing management focus on the shopper and conducted to the emergence, formalization and development of the shopper marketing concept and approach.

Being a new concept, the main purpose of this paper is to categorize, compile and analyze the existing knowledge on shopper marketing. In order to achieve that goal, a search for the relevant literature was conducted in several types of sources, since 1980 until the end of 2012: academic journals, practitioner journals, conference proceedings, trade association reports, and books. This search enabled the identification of 110 works, all of which were scanned for relevance. Of those articles, 34 were analyzed with a deeper focus, privileging the academic sources and the more recent and comprehensive studies.

This paper is organized as follows: in the next section, an overview and classification of the researched literature is presented. From that classification, some significant definitions of shopper marketing are discussed. Next, several associated themes, found in the literature as the most relevant, are reviewed and analyzed. The paper ends with a reflection on the shopper marketing approach and status, pointing out directions for future research.

2. Shopper Marketing Literature Review

2.1 Classification of shopper marketing literature

In the search for shopper marketing literature, both broad and narrow works were found. The broad works are those that study shopper marketing as a whole and in a comprehensive way, while the narrow ones are those that focus on one or few specific aspects included in the shopper marketing concept. The main broad works found are summarized in table 1, describing their contributions and type of the methodology. The narrower studies are summarized in table 2 with a similar approach.

Table 1. Classification of selected broad shopper marketing literature

Authors	Methodology	Contributions
GMA/Deloitte (2007)	Conceptual and Empirical (qualitative; interviews with shopper marketing professionals)	Reviews and proposes a shopper marketing definition, benefits, barriers and requirements, focusing in retailer-manufacturer collaboration.
GMA/Deloitte (2008)	Descriptive and Empirical (qualitative; interviews with shopper marketing professionals)	Describes the shopper marketing relevance, benefits, activity status and sophistication. Also describes a shopper marketing lifecycle framework, enhancing the need for retailer-manufacturer cooperation.
Oxford Strategic Marketing (2008)	Descriptive and Empirical (quantitative; online survey and follow-up telephone interviews with shopper marketing professionals)	Describes the shopper marketing status in organizations and identifies core issues to be addressed in the adoption shopper marketing.
Harris (2010)	Descriptive	Explains the origins and evolution towards shopper marketing.
Retail Commission on Shopper Marketing (2010)	Conceptual	Explains the origins of shopper marketing and defines it; identifies shopper marketing key principles and proposes a framework for collaborative shopper marketing.
Shankar (2011)	Conceptual	Defines shopper marketing; explores the shopper insights production generation; identifies industry practices; identifies emerging trends.
Shankar et al. (2011)	Descriptive	Identifies innovations and emerging trends in shopper marketing.

From table 1 and table 2 it can be concluded that shopper marketing is a recent approach and that has been gaining attention sustainably. It is also possible to notice that only recently some empirical studies have been conducted. The empirical studies already developed have separately focused on specific aspects of shopper marketing, and tend to demonstrate the relevance of the shopper marketing approach. Some empirical qualitative studies have also been conducted, in order to gather the perspective of manufacturers and retailers about the shopper marketing status, relevance, barriers and practical frameworks applied. Most of the studies were conducted with USA samples related to supermarkets and fast moving consumer goods industries.

Table 2. Classification of selected narrow shopper marketing literature

Authors	Methodology	Contributions
Kahn and Schmittlein (1989)	Empirical Quantitative Secondary data analysis based on IRI Academic Research Data Base	Analyses shopping trip behaviour, concluding that a better understanding of the purchase process can assist in generating testable hypotheses as to how the shopping trip decision may influence other choice decisions.
Chandon et al. (2002)	Empirical Experimental and Quantitative Mechanical observation with eye tracking devices	Demonstrates that, for the products studied, in-store visual attention increases the memory-based probability of consideration.
Inman et al. (2004)	Empirical Quantitative Data from POPAI store intercept survey of shoppers with purchase intentions measured prior to entering the store and register tapes collected upon checkout	Proposes and tests a model of in-store decision-making, representing one of the most comprehensive studies of in-store decision-making to date.
Sinha and Uniyal (2005)	Empirical Quantitative Personal observation of shoppers	Proposes and demonstrates that behaviour is a good segmentation basis of shoppers and that observation can be successfully used for analysing it. It also reviews studies on shopper typologies.
Larson et al. (2005)	Empirical Quantitative Mechanical observation with affixed radio frequency identification tags	Presents a data set on supermarket shopper travelling patterns, finding that some common presumptions about shopper travel behaviour (e.g. racetrack) are not true.
Larson et al. (2006)	Empirical Quantitative Mechanical observation with affixed radio frequency identification tags	Analyses travel in-store patterns concluding that a better understanding of shopping patterns creates opportunities to design stores that better meet shopper needs.
Neff (2008)	Descriptive Secondary data from POPAI and OgilvyAction	Presents data about shopper decisions, demonstrating the effectiveness of in-store communication.
Chandon et al. (2007, 2009)	Empirical Experimental and Quantitative Mechanical observation with eye tracking devices	Confirms the importance of visual-based factors in driving brand consideration, raising the issue of what influences in-store attention.
Inman et al. (2009)	Empirical Quantitative Data from POPAI store intercept survey of shoppers with purchase intentions measured prior to entering the store and register tapes collected upon checkout	Explores how product category and customer characteristics affect the likelihood of unplanned purchases, finding that purchase frequency, displays, household size and gender affect in-store decision making. At the same time, the use of a list, more frequent trips, limiting the number of aisles visited, limiting the time spent in store, and paying by cash are effective in decreasing the likelihood of unplanned purchases.
Dulsrud and Jacobsen (2009)	Conceptual	Explores how power influences and frames consumer purchases and habits, concluding that power and discipline are underestimated as explanations to the formation of shopping behaviour and consumer routines.
Suher and Sorensen (2010)	Empirical Quantitative Mechanical observation with affixed radio frequency identification tags	Introduces a model that describes shopper behaviour in terms of traffic across the store.
ECR Europe (2011)	Conceptual	Develops a framework (an approach and a set of tools) to provide a deeper understanding of consumer and shopper needs, enhancing the need of a collaborative process.
Bell et al. (2011)	Empirical Quantitative Shoppers interviews and self-report panel data	Explores and demonstrates that pre-shopping factors (trip goals, shopping objectives and prior marketing exposures) can drive unplanned buying. Also provides a literature review on unplanned buying.

2.2 Shopper marketing definition and relevance

Even though shopper marketing is a recent concept (Shankar et al., 2011), some definitions were already found in the literature, including academic and industry-oriented. The definitions found are presented in table 3 and it is possible to note that, in essence, they vary in its boundaries, i.e. some definitions are narrower than others.

Table 3. Shopper marketing definitions

Authors	Definition
GMA/Delloitte (2007)	The employment of any marketing stimuli, developed based on a deep understanding of shopper behavior, designed to build brand equity, engage the shopper and lead him/her to make a purchase.
In-Store Marketing Institute (2009)	The use of strategic insights into the shopper mindset to drive effective marketing and merchandising activity in a specific store environment.
Retail Commission on Shopper Marketing (2010)	The use of insights-driven marketing and merchandising initiatives to satisfy the needs of targeted shoppers, enhance the shopping experience, and improve business results and brand equity for retailers and manufacturers.
Shankar (2011)	The planning and execution of all marketing activities that influence a shopper along, and beyond, the entire path-to-purchase, from the point at which the motivation to shop first emerges through to purchase, consumption, repurchase, and recommendation.

Regardless of the definition adopted, the definitions presented in table 3 are structural coherent among them, with a shared view that shoppers have specific needs beyond consumption, which represent marketing management opportunities. Besides that, the interpretation of those definitions also indicates that the shopper marketing approach does not conflict with traditional marketing. In fact, it is rooted in traditional marketing, which principles do often apply to shopper marketing. Nevertheless, there are some key differences between them (resumed in table 4), since there are some specific traces of the shopper marketing approach:

- The focus on the specific needs of the shopper and its thorough understanding, assuming that consumers and shoppers are not always the same and, even if they are the same, the shopper is in a different mode while shopping (Pincott, 2010; Sorensen, 2008, 2009);
- Effective collaboration between retailer and producer/brand;
- Marketing action at the POP, but not limited to in-store activities, since it is relevant to influence the behavior of targeted shoppers during all the phases of the path-to-purchase;
- A broad scope, including activities commonly falling under category management, trade marketing, marketing at retail, merchandising, POP advertising and in-store presence.

Table 4. Key differences between shopper marketing and traditional marketing

Dimension	Shopper Marketing	Traditional Marketing
Aim	Create awareness and influence triggers in the shopping cycle	Create awareness and use push and pull strategies
Target	Shopper and shopper-consumer link	Consumer
Mode of individual	Shopping	Consuming
Breadth of perspective	All the path-to purchase shopping cycle, 360° view of the shopper	Brand and category
Category focus	Multiple	Single
Promotions	Shopper-directed	Trade and consumer-directed

Source: adapted from Shankar et al. (2011)

Also at the core of shopper marketing is the need for producers and retailers to ensure maximum consistency of the messages and positioning outside the POP with in-store communication, between the different tools, media and channels (Kessler, 2004). It means that, in order to maximize the brand impact and presence, it is important to communicate fully integrated marketing (Fam et al., 2011).

Even if the shopper marketing activities should be present all along the path-to-purchase, the in-store marketing activities and stimulus are at the core of shopper marketing. The relevance of in-store

advertising is being increasingly recognized (Schneider and Rau, 2009; Harris, 2010; GMA/Deloitte, 2007; Wyner, 2011), which can be supported by several works reporting that a considerable percentage of purchase decisions are made or changed at the POP (Chandon et al., 2009; Sinha and Uniyal, 2005; OgilvyAction, 2008), providing an opportunity for in-store stimulus to activate and influence less planned purchases. Additionally, other factors contribute to the current and future relevance of in-store marketing communications (Schneider and Rau, 2009; Harris, 2010; GMA/Deloitte, 2007): the decline of traditional media, the decline of brand loyalty and the emergence of more and better ways to interact with the shopper at the POP.

Besides in-store advertising, other elements of the store atmosphere might have effects on the shopping behaviour (Donovan et al., 1994) and store image (Baker et al., 1994). Turley and Milliman (2000) identify the other atmospheric variables that can affect shopping behaviour, categorizing them in external variables (e.g. exterior signs), general interior variables (e.g. lightning), layout and design variables (e.g. space allocation), POP and decoration variables (e.g. displays), and human variables (e.g. employee uniforms).

2.3 Shopper marketing benefits, barriers and difficulties

Besides the shopper marketing definition, a frequent issue found in our literature review has to do with shopper marketing implications, commonly categorized in terms of benefits, barriers and difficulties. Concerning the benefits, Turley and Chebat (2002) remark that the environment created by retail managers is an important strategic variable, being able to affect the shopping behaviour. Compiling the benefits indicated in the literature, it can be stated that shopper marketing activities may have advantages for shoppers, retailers and producers (Shankar, 2011; ECR Europe, 2011; Huskins and Goldring, 2009; Harris, 2010; GMA/Deloitte, 2007, 2008):

- For the shopper: products, services, shopping experiences and communications more directed and tailored to their needs, and therefore more useful and relevant.
- For the retailer: assuming a higher shopper satisfaction with the POP, there is a higher potential for increased loyalty and recommendation, besides increases in sales and improved differentiation. Also, the incorporation of shopper insights into category management enhances assortment and space management and develops deeper relationships with selected producers.
- For the producer/brand: strengthening of brand equity; development of more effective brand activation at a moment of truth; identification of key touch-points and stimulus to more effectively interact with the shopper; increases in loyalty and sales; deeper relationships with retailers.

Nevertheless, some barriers and difficulties are identified in the development of shopper marketing projects. In fact, despite retailers' intentions, the stores are not always presented to shopper as the retailer would like – e.g. products on the shelves appear to be messy (Castro, Morales and Nowlis, 2013). Generalizing, the most common obstacles to shopper marketing encountered in the literature were (Sommer, 2010; Shankar, 2011; Nitzberg 2010; GMA/Deloitte, 2007, 2008; Retail Commission on Shopper Marketing, 2010; Sansolo, 2010; Dellaert et al., 2008):

- Lack of information and market research on shopper behavior, worsen by the complexity of understanding shoppers, since they are not easily predictable;
- Technical difficulties and costs in scaling/multiplying shopper insights for different banners/stores;
- Concepts of consumer marketing replicated without adapting them to the mentality and mood of shoppers, making the offers and messages not relevant to shoppers;
- Lack of marketing managers with specific skills and expertise in shopper marketing;
- Lack of standards to measure marketing activities at the POP, and traditional valuation metrics applied to shopper marketing activities;
- The legacy of traditional communication processes, budget allocations and organizational structures, based on old assumptions;
- Difficulty on the retailer-producer alignment on strategy and execution and in finding win-win-win solutions for the retailer, producer and shopper;
- Distributors focused on short-term results and on selling products and less on communications and solutions within the POP.

3. Conclusions and Directions for Further Research

Due to the number, dates and content of the works reviewed, it can be concluded that shopper marketing is a recent, actual and relevant area for both academics and practitioners. Additionally, there are some key differences with the traditional marketing approach, which poses new challenges and opportunities, for both managers and academics. The literature reviewed is complementary and coherent, sharing a structural common trace that recognizes that shoppers have specific needs beyond consumption, which can be a marketing opportunity if they are properly analyzed and satisfied.

Since shopper marketing is in the early stages of development, there are several directions and issues yet to be explored by research. Future studies may try to find answers and insights to the following research questions: How effective is in-store communication in other industries besides supermarkets and groceries? How can shopper marketing be more effective through visual in-store cues? How can the in-store marketing activities be effectively linked to out-of-store activities, considering all the phases of the path-to-purchase? How can brands/producers scale the research and development of shopper insights to meet the specificities of different banners, channels and stores, considering its costs? What are the appropriate metrics to evaluate shopper marketing activities? What are the implications of social and mobile media for shopper marketing? How to manage and integrate shopper marketing activities across different platforms along the path to purchase?

Providing answers to those questions might be useful and relevant for managers and academics, in order to better evaluate the influence and effectiveness of shopper marketing strategies, stimulus and tools.

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