Understanding multichannel shopper journey configuration: an application of goal theory

Patricia Harris[1], Francesca Dall'Olmo Riley and Chris Hand

Kingston Business School

Kingston Hill

Kingston upon Thames KT2 7LB

[1] Corresponding author – harris@kingston.ac.uk

Abstract

Shopping motivation is the dominant theoretical framework upon which shopping behaviour research is based. A shopper's motivation is assumed to be fixed and enduring, implying, in turn, homogeneity of shopper journeys. This paper reports on an exploratory, qualitative study of 76 multichannel shopper journeys. Heterogeneity of individual consumers' shopper journey configuration, in terms of numbers and types of phases and channels, was found both within and across product categories, which cannot be accounted for by motivation theory. For an individual shopper, multichannel shopper journey configuration appears to be driven by multiple goals operating at varying levels of abstraction. Higher level goals are relatively stable but lower level goals vary over time, place and context resulting in heterogeneity of journey configuration. Goal theory is proposed as a more suitable lens through which to examine multichannel shopping behaviour, overcoming the deficiencies inherent in shopping motivation theory.

Key words:

Shopper journey; multichannel shopping; goal theory; motivation theory; shopping motivation

Introduction

Researchers have long sought to understand the drivers of shopping behaviour (e.g. Stone, 1954; Tauber, 1972; Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980; Westbrook and Black, 1985; Rohm and Swaminathan, 2004; Ganesh et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2014; Harris et al., 2017). While Tauber (1972) asked why people shop, it is perhaps now more pertinent to ask why people shop *in the way they do*, as the proliferation of retail formats and channels has spurred growth in multichannel shopping.

Multichannel shopping is defined as purchase behaviour across multiple channels (Kumar and Venkatesan, 2005). The development of retailers' online stores and mobile applications alongside the established channels of physical stores, telephone and catalogues offers flexibility and choice to the shopper in where, how and when they carry out their shopping, and shopping behaviour has changed as a result (Verhoef et al., 2015). Multichannel retailing removes the spatio-temporal barriers to shopping which exist when shoppers only have a fixed store network to shop from. Channels have different characteristics and are not necessarily direct substitutes for one another and may be used by shoppers in different ways. New shopping activities such as showrooming where shoppers research in store and buy online (Rapp et al. 2015) and webrooming where shoppers research online and buy in store (Verhoef et al., 2015) have emerged as shoppers exploit channels' distinctive characteristics and take advantages of the opportunities offered by a multichannel environment. In this context, the term multichannel shopper journey (Deloitte, 2014) has emerged to encompass the combination of shopping-related activities and channels used as the shopper moves from the initial stimulus to purchase through to post purchase activity such as exchange or return. A multichannel shopper journey differs from the purchase process or funnel in that it comprises search and evaluation activities in addition to the act

of shopping, can be linear or iterative, usually involves more than one shopping channel, and takes place over elapsed time ranging from minutes to months. In a multichannel shopping environment, the ways in which a shopper journey can be configured are numerous. Shoppers search for ideas and information online, examine products in store, purchase via their mobile phone and return an unsuitable product at a drop-off point. The large number of shopping activity/channel permutations creates challenges for researchers in attempting to understand and predict patterns of shopping behaviour.

While this diversity in multichannel shopper journey configurations adds complexity for researchers and retailers, it provides flexibility to the shopper. As the traditional trip to a store or mall becomes the multichannel shopper journey, so the interaction grows between the activities which comprise the shopper journey, such as searching for products or compiling a shopping list, and other activities which the shopper engages in as part of their daily life.

Within the overall domain of shopping behaviour, multichannel shopper journey configuration is an under-researched subject and there is no specific guidance from the literature on the most appropriate conceptual basis to adopt in its research. Shopping motivation has been widely used as the conceptual basis for examining shopping behaviour in general, but such research tends to assume that a shopper's motivation is stable, fixed and enduring, and applies 'universally across contexts' (Bagozzi et al., 2003, p915). This would, in turn, imply fixed and stable shopper journeys. Shopper journeys may not always, however, be configured in the same way; even within a product category shoppers may exhibit heterogeneity as they use different channels to weave shopping activities into the fabric of their lives.

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Goal theory (Pervin, 1983; 1989; Gollwitzer, 1993; Austin and Vancouver, 1996; Carver and Scheier, 1998) provides an alternative theoretical lens through which to examine shopper journey configuration. While motivation is the general energization of behaviour, goals determine the direction of behaviour and turn motivation into specific action (Elliot, 2006). A goal is an individual's 'internal representation of a desired state' (Austin and Vancouver, 1996, p338). Individuals pursue multiple goals simultaneously although at any time, one goal is likely to be dominant or *focal* in shaping behaviour, with others acting in a background capacity (Kopetz et al., 2012). Goals shape and guide actions (Pintrich, 2000), thus an individual's behaviour is dependent on the nature of their focal goal. Individuals may attain a given goal through multiple means, and specific behaviour may contribute to the attainment of more than one goal. A goal-theory perspective on the shopper journey, therefore, accommodates (a) heterogeneity in journey configuration, as the shopper's focal goal changes, and (b) shopper journeys where the focal goal is not shopping related.

This paper argues that while shopping motivation is the dominant theoretical framework upon which shopping behaviour research is based, it has deficiencies when applied to multichannel shopping behaviour, and is insufficiently nuanced to accommodate multichannel shopper journey configuration. Goal theory is proposed as a more suitable lens through which to examine shopping behaviour in a multichannel environment, overcoming the deficiencies inherent in the use of shopping motivation as the explanatory framework. In our application of goal theory to multichannel shopper journey configuration, we build on earlier research, such as that of Kopetz et al. (2012) and Puccinelli et al. (2009) who see goals as drivers and shapers of shopping behaviour, and extend this body of research into the multichannel shopping context.

Applying goal theory to multichannel shopper journey configuration will contribute to the understanding of shopping behaviour, and additionally will benefit retailers as they seek to optimise their investment in channel development and ongoing channel operations. This paper reports on an exploratory study of shopper journey configuration. The objective of the study is to apply goal theory to an examination of the ways in which individual consumers' shopper journeys are configured within and across product categories. A qualitative approach is adopted to explore multichannel shoppers' journey configurations alongside their focal and background goals.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. First research on shopping motivation and on the closely related concept of shopping orientation is discussed, and a review of literature on goal theory is presented. The research methodology is then set out, followed by presentation of the research findings, discussion, conclusions and recommendations.

Shopping motivation and shopping orientation

Examination of the extant research on shopping behaviour indicates the dominance of shopping motivation and shopping orientation as explanatory constructs. These two constructs seem to be closely entwined; although early studies (e.g. Westbrook and Black, 1985) have been based specifically on one or the other, subsequent researchers have conflated them. There is no consensus among researchers as to the precise definitions of shopping orientation and shopping motivation (Wagner and Rudolph, 2010) and they are often used interchangeably (Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980; Chetthamrongchai and Davies, 2000; Mehta et al., 2014). Reviews of shopper typologies (e.g. Ganesh et al., 2007) generally encompass typologies based on orientation and on motivation without differentiating between them.

Research on shopping orientation can be traced to Stone's (1954) sociological analysis of Chicago housewives. Stone identified four orientations to shopping – economic, personalising, ethical and apathetic – on the basis of attitudes to shopping and preferences for either local independent stores or large chain stores. Darden and Reynolds (1971) were able to replicate Stone's typology, also finding economic, personalising, ethical and apathetic orientations to shopping; the economic and apathetic orientations have been identified subsequently in a number of studies (e.g. Darden and Ashton, 1974; Reynolds et al., 2002; Brown et al., 2003). However, beyond these two orientations, there is considerable variety in the other shopping orientations which have been identified, for example: demanding shoppers, fastidious shoppers, quality seeking shoppers (Darden and Ashton, 1974); involved shoppers and community-oriented shoppers (Brown et al., 2003); special, brand-loyal, store-loyal, problem-solving, psycho-socializing and name-conscious shoppers (Moschis, 1976). There is, therefore, a lack of consistency in the shopping orientations identified and a resultant failure of research to coalesce around any consensus on what shopping orientation is and how it manifests itself.

Research on shopping motivation is generally considered to originate with Tauber (1972) who examined reasons for shopping beyond the purchase of a product. He identified 11 shopping motives, organised into personal and social. Westbrook and Black (1985) constructed a motivationally-oriented shopper typology to overcome the perceived limitations of typologies based on shopper orientations; lack of a unifying conceptual basis and differing research designs, creating the plethora of orientations noted above. Buttle and Coates (1984) and Westbrook and Black (1985) took Tauber's (1972) shopping motives as a starting point and attempted either to directly replicate these (Westbrook and Black) or to

fit their own research findings into Tauber's framework (Buttle and Coates). Neither succeeded completely, and each study identified new motivations for shopping.

Despite the rich array of motivations generated in early research, the dominant shopping motivation typology has been more parsimonious, dividing shoppers into those motivated by convenience or utilitarian value, and those motivated by recreation or hedonic value (Bellenger et al., 1977; Babin et al., 1994). This recreational/hedonic versus convenience/utilitarian dichotomy has been widely employed in shopping behaviour research and the literature refers to utilitarian/hedonic shopping motivation and to utilitarian/hedonic shopping orientation interchangeably. Babin et al. (1994) posited that hedonic *and* utilitarian value could potentially be obtained from shopping, however researchers have tended to conceptualise these as mutually exclusive (Kaltcheva and Weitz, 2006; Yim et al., 2014; Wagner et al., 2017), cementing the view that shoppers have one fixed and stable motivation/orientation, utilitarian or hedonic, which governs their entire shopping behaviour. Farquhar and Rowley's (2009, p427) observation that people are not 'convenience oriented *per se*' is an exception to this perspective, as is the view that motivation is dynamic (Megicks et al.'s, 2008) or contextualised (Buttle, 1992), but the prevailing view is that it is fixed for an individual and across consumer segments or shopper types.

Shopping motivation has more recently been examined in a multichannel context and is considered to influence shoppers' perceptions of channel attributes and their subsequent response to shopping channels. Shoppers' perceptions of channel attributes have been conceptualised as fixed due to their enduring shopping motivation; in turn, there has been a tendency to associate a utilitarian shopping motivation with the online channel (Mathwick

et al., 2001; Overby and Lee, 2006) and a hedonic motivation with the store channel (Bäckström, 2006). By extension, shoppers' stable, enduring shopping motivation and perceptions of channel attributes are believed to shape their shopper journeys, implying consistency in channel use and journey configuration (Balasubramanian et al., 2005).

Wagner and Rudolph (2010) suggest that research on shopping motivation lags behind motivational research in other domains due to weaknesses in the conceptualisation of motivational constructs. They note that shopping motivations are specified by scholars at a single level of specificity, i.e. all motivations are considered to be equivalent in scale and scope. However, research findings such as those of Westbrook and Black (1985) yield motivations which do not appear to be equivalent; for example, Westbrook and Black's choice optimisation motivation appears to be a lower level, more operational, construct than their power and authority motivation. Building on Wagner's (2007) means-end chain analysis of shopping motivation, Wagner and Rudolph (2010) propose a hierarchical representation of shopping motives based on the level of abstraction; higher order motivations such as power and authority are considered to be more abstract than lower order motivations such as choice optimisation. While their hierarchical model advances understanding by tackling the problem of assuming that all motivations are equivalent in their specificity, Wagner and Rudolph examine shopping motivation in isolation from other motivations of behaviour. In reality, shopping is often woven into the fabric of daily life and it may be misleading to consider it as a separate entity. Additionally, Wagner and Rudolph's research only addresses store shopping and conceptualises the shopping trip as a single spatio-temporal entity. It does not accommodate non-store shopping or phased multichannel shopper journeys where shopping activities such as search and evaluation are

conducted in different channels and at different times. There is scope, therefore, to build on Wagner and Rudolph's contribution and extend the idea of hierarchical drivers of shopping behaviour into a multichannel context.

In summary, research on shopping behaviour is dominated by studies of shopping motivation but conflates shopping motivation and shopping orientation, and lacks consensus on the nature of the motivations which drive shopping behaviour. Additionally, researchers generally conceptualise the shopper as having one fixed and stable motivation. Together, these weaknesses suggest that neither shopping orientation nor shopping motivation provide an optimal theoretical basis for research which seeks to explain the variety of ways in which multichannel shopper journeys are configured.

Goal Theory

The weaknesses of the motivation approach to shopping behaviour can be overcome by adopting an alternative basis for inquiry: goal theory. Goal theory (Pervin, 1983; 1989; Gollwitzer, 1993; Austin and Vancouver, 1996; Carver and Scheier, 1998) sits within the broader field of motivation theory. Both are grounded in approach-avoidance theory (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Foxall, 1990, 2010; Harris et al., 2017) in explaining behaviour as a positive (approach) or negative (avoidance) response to stimuli. Covington (2000) reviews the relationship between goal theory and motivational theory, and notes that goals are a 'practical surrogate for a concept – motivation – whose nature is not yet fully understood' (p174).

Goal theory has been used to examine actions and achievement in psychology, leadership, organisational behaviour and education (Ryan, 1970; Elliott and Dweck, 1988; Elliot and Harackiewitcz, 1994; Locke and Latham, 2002). Pervin (1983; 1989) proposed goals as the

most informative basis for understanding intentional behaviour. Goals are the building blocks of mind-set theory (Gollwitzer et al., 1990) which posits that individuals execute volitional control by moving from a deliberative to an implemental mind-set, and in the process their goals become more concrete. Construal-level theory (Trope and Lieberman, 2003) reinforces this view that goals exist on a continuum from the abstract to the concrete. At any point, individuals may seek to attain multiple goals at varying levels of abstraction (Carver and Scheier, 1998; Gollwitzer, 1999; Trope et al., 2007), with a focal goal acting as the dominant driver of behaviour and other goals acting in a background capacity. In contrast to the use of a single, fixed, motivation to explain shopping behaviour 'much can be gained from taking a broader perspective by considering the other goals in which the focal goal is embedded' (Pieters et al., 1995 p. 228). Goals exhibit properties of equifinality (a goal may be attained by multiple means) and multifinality (any one means may attain multiple goals). Focal and background goals interact such that the means used to achieve a focal goal may differ according to the background goals which are active (Kopetz et al., 2012).

Goal Systems

As individuals are considered to pursue multiple goals, the relationships between them have been examined. A hierarchical conceptualisation is most commonly proposed where higher level goals drive and shape those at lower levels (Powers, 1973; Carver and Scheier, 1998; Vallacher and Wegner, 1987; Pieters et al., 1995). At the highest level of abstraction goals consist of over-arching norms for behaviour, while at the lowest level of abstraction goals act operationally, driving specific behaviour choices. Adopting Powers' (1973) hierarchy, system concepts are the highest level and act as ultimate standards or norms for behaviour; for example an individual's system concept may be to be a responsible citizen. Principles are

the intermediate level of the hierarchy, and are considered to be the 'underlying qualities of specific acts' (Pieters et al., 1995, p229). The individual whose system concept is responsible citizenship may have as a principle the goal of responsible consumption. Programmes occupy the lowest level in hierarchy and have the lowest level of abstraction. Our hypothetical individual may operationalise their system concept of responsible citizenship and principle of responsible consumption by a programme of cycling to the local market to purchase locally-grown, organic produce. These three levels of Powers' (1973) hierarchy can be thought of as expressing the *why*, *what* and *how* of behaviour.

Goal Dimensions

Austin and Vancouver (1996) identify six dimensions on which goals can be evaluated or measured: importance/commitment, difficulty, specificity, temporal range, level of consciousness and complexity/connectedness. The importance of a goal determines the level of commitment to its attainment and leads to prioritization. The degree of difficulty which an individual assigns to a goal affects perceptions of attainment probability and of self-efficacy. Goal specificity ranges from concrete to abstract and is a function both of the level in the goal system hierarchy, and of the individual. Variation in goals' temporal range is also related to their level in the goal system hierarchy, with lower level goals having a shorter time horizon for attainment than those above. Individuals may be overtly conscious of a goal, or it may exist at a subconscious or even unconscious level. Austin and Vancouver (1996) suggest that goals are 'dynamically conscious' (p. 345), with their prominence in memory changing over time. The perceived complexity of a goal generates linkages to other goals and creates the possibility of goal conflict.

Shopping behaviour and goals

Goal theory offers a theoretical lens through which to examine shopping behaviour, overcoming problems inherent in the use of motivation, at a single level of specificity, to explain behaviour. Goal theory allows for shopping behaviour to be shaped by a hierarchy of forces from abstract, higher-order goals (I want to be a responsible citizen) through intermediate goals (I need to buy a birthday card for a friend) to specific, lower-order, goals (I will walk to an independent shop to purchase a hand-made card printed on unbleached paper). Kopetz et al. (2012) argue for the applicability of goal theory to consumer behaviour research as it can explain both stable and variety-seeking behaviours. Consumer decision making on anything other than directly comparable brand choice requires a hierarchical, goal-related framework as the consumer moves from choice of product category, through product form, to brand (Gutman, 1997; Lawson, 1997). Puccinelli et al. (2009) consider goals to provide 'a general approach to understanding influences on shopping behaviour' (p17), and some research has been conducted specifically on shopping goals (Hibbert and Tagg, 2001; Lee and Ariely; 2006; Bell et al., 2011). However, these studies examine shopping goals in specific, single-channel contexts (craft fair; convenience store) or conceptualise goals narrowly and at a single level of specificity (purpose of grocery store visit).

The research reported on here builds on these studies in its aim of applying goal theory to explain multichannel shopper journey configuration. The objectives of the research were: 1. to conduct a detailed examination of multichannel shoppers' journeys in order to identify the goal(s) being pursued by the shopper around and at the time of the journey; 2. assess the consistency of individual shoppers' journey configuration within and across product categories, and; 3. relate journey configuration to the shoppers' goals in order to assess the

applicability of goal theory as a conceptual framework to explain multichannel shopper

journey configuration.

Methodology

As research on shopper journeys and, in turn, our understanding thereof, is limited an

exploratory, qualitative research design was adopted. Qualitative research allows the

participant to take centre stage and for their accounts of actions and perceptions to emerge

in a naturalistic manner (Miles et al., 2014). 76 shopper journeys were identified from depth

interviews with 13 multichannel shoppers. Two selection criteria were used in recruiting

participants; they shop regularly these days, and they regularly use more than one shopping

channel. The sample, see Table 1, consisted of 7 males and 6 females ranging in age from 24

to 72. Participants were not selected on the basis of their socio-economic status but

represented a wide range of occupations and life stages. In order to reflect varying access

to the store shopping channel, participants were selected from geographical locations

across the UK.

Table 1: Research participants

Code	Gender	Age	Life stage	Occupation	Location
BE	Male	35	Lives alone	Self-employed electronics business owner	Suburban
CA	Female	56	Lives with partner	Local government officer	Suburban
CL	Male	72	Lives with partner	Retired office manager	Suburban
IV	Male	28	Lives with flat-mate	IT project manager	Suburban
JE	Male	25	Lives with partner and young children	Store manager	Suburban
KY	Female	33	Lives with parents	Business analyst	Urban
LA	Female	24	Lives with partner and young children	Travel agent	Suburban
MA	Female	44	Lives with adult children	Art curator	Urban
NI	Female	24	Lives with mother	Photographer	Urban
RE	Male	42	Lives with partner and young children	Sports centre manager	Urban
SP	Female	40	Lives with partner and young children	Project manager	Semi-rural
ST	Male	55	Lives with partner and teenage children	IT engineer	Small town
TR	Male	64	Lives with partner	Retired consultant	Rural

Interviews began with questions about shopping behaviour – shopping frequency, products/services shopped for and channels used. Participants were asked about their attitude to shopping in general and to the main types of shopping they engaged in. The concept of a shopper journey was then explained to participants to clarify that the focus was not a physical shopping trip, but an overall sequence of shopping-related activities across shopping channels. Participants were asked to describe shopper journeys that sprang to mind, to explain the reason(s) for the journey, then to describe each phase of the journey in terms of the activity performed and the channel used, and to recount any post-purchase activity which took place such as returning the product. Participants were encouraged to talk about the shopper journey in the broadest possible sense. They were asked if the

shopper journey was typical for them when purchasing that type of product and, if not, to describe other shopper journeys for that product. Interviews ended when participants could not describe any additional shopper journeys which differed in terms of their configuration. Interviews lasted on average 1.5 hours and were audio recorded.

Interviews were transcribed and the resulting transcripts were subjected to close analysis of the text via immersion by repeated reading and listening. Each of the 76 shopper journeys isolated from the interview transcripts was disaggregated into phases in terms of activities and channels. A shopper journey phase was defined as a self-contained part of the overall journey which was separated from the remainder of the journey by elapsed time and/or a channel switch. The transcripts were subsequently subjected to thematic analysis. A combination of descriptive, in vivo, process, emotion and values coding (Miles et al., 2014) was used in the first-cycle stage. After open coding, second cycle axial coding (Saldaña, 2013) was conducted to refine initial codes, remove redundancies and look for connections in order consolidate themes in the data. Participants' goals, level of involvement with the product category, their product knowledge and experience, and their perception of the risk inherent in the shopper journey and associated purchase emerged from this thematic analysis of their accounts. Descriptive and process coding were used to isolate programmes, the lowest level goals in Powers' (1973) hierarchy, while emotion and values coding were able to isolate the higher level goals known as principles and system concepts.

Findings

The 76 shopper journeys covered a wide range of product categories and purchasing situations, from replacing a printer ink cartridge to buying a wedding dress and from buying train tickets to planning and booking a tailor-made foreign holiday. The product category for

which each participant shopped most frequently yielded multiple shopper journeys; the

smallest number of multiple journeys was 2 and the largest was 4. Shopper journey

duration, in elapsed time, ranged from a few minutes to 6 months. The overall set of

channels used comprised stores, online (on computer, browser on tablet and mobile app),

click and collect, catalogue and telephone. Participants' accounts allowed the temporal

structure of their shopper journeys to be identified. 37 of the shopper journeys consisted of

more than one discrete phase, separated by elapsed time; in some cases the phase occurred

outside any shopping channel, e.g. soliciting/receiving word of mouth recommendations.

Table 2 shows the numbers of journey configurations by channel and phase, with non-

channel phases shown in parentheses.

Table 2: Shopper journeys by channel and phase*

Single Channel Journeys	**48**
Store purchase	21
Store search →store purchase	2
Store search →(WOM recommendation) →store purchase	1
Online purchase for delivery	18
Online search→ online purchase for delivery	3
Online search→(e-WOM reviews)→online purchase	3
Two Channel Journeys	**25**
Store search →online purchase for delivery	1
Store search → online search → click&collect purchase	1
Store search → Online search→(WOM recommendation/e-WOM reviews)→store purchase	1
Click&collect purchase	1
Online search →store purchase	10
Online search → click&collect purchase	1
Online search → (e-WOM reviews)→ click&collect purchase	1
Online search →telephone purchase	2
Online search →store search →online purchase for delivery	1
Online search → store search → click&collect purchase	1
Online search →store search →online search →store purchase	1
(WOM recommendation)→(e-WOM reviews)→online search→ click&collect purchase	1
Catalogue search→store purchase	1
Catalogue search →online purchase for delivery	1
Catalogue search → click&collect purchase	1
Three Channel Journeys	**3**
Online search → telephone search →store purchase	1
Online search →store search → catalogue search →store purchase	1
(WOM recommendation)→ Online search → telephone search →store search→ store purchase	1
Total shopper journeys	**76**

*Only channel/phase combinations reported as being used by participants are listed due to the large number of permutations

48 of the 76 shopper journeys were single channel. 39 of these were also single phase with store-only and online-only journeys being roughly equally represented. 28 journeys were omnichannel with different channels used across the phases of the journey. Online search followed by store purchase was the most common form of omnichannel journey, with no other channel/phase combination standing out. Only 3 of the 76 reported journeys involved

three channels, and no journeys involved more than three channels. The following section

provides examples of the homogeneity and heterogeneity arising from participants'

accounts of their shopper journeys.

Shopper journey homogeneity and heterogeneity

Table 3 sets out the shopper journey configurations reported by each participant. All

participants exhibited multichannel shopper behaviour in that they used different channels

for different shopper journeys. 11 of the 13 participants also exhibited omnichannel

shopper behaviour, using more than one shopping channel in the same shopper journey

while participants BE and IV reported only single channel journeys. BE reported the smallest

number of shopper journey configurations, 2, followed by CA, IV, RE and ST with 3. LA

reported the largest number, 7, followed by JE and NI with 6. The heterogeneity of

individuals' shopper journey configurations shown in Table 3 would not be expected if

shoppers exhibited a fixed and stable shopping motivation.

Table 3: Participants' shopper journey configurations

Shopper Journeys	Participants												
	BE	CA	CL	IV	JE	KY	LA	MA	NI	RE	SP	ST	TR
Single Channel Journeys													
Store purchase	■		■	■	■	■	■	■			■	■	■
Store search →store purchase			■					■					
Store search →(WOM recommendation) →store purchase				■									
Online purchase for delivery	■		■	■	■	■	■	■			■		■
Online search→ online purchase for delivery					■			■	■				
Online search→(e-WOM reviews)→online purchase					■				■			■	
Two Channel Journeys													
Store search →online purchase for delivery							■						
Store search →online search→click&collect purchase											■		
Store search → online search→(WOM recommendation/e-WOM reviews)→store purchase							■						
Click&collect purchase								■					
Online search →store purchase			■		■	■	■			■	■		
Online search → click&collect purchase										■			
Online search → (e-WOM reviews)→ click&collect purchase				■									
Online search →telephone purchase							■						■
Online search →store search →online purchase for delivery												■	
Online search → store search → click&collect purchase		■											
Online search →store search →online search →store purchase		■											
(WOM recommendation→e-WOM reviews)→online search→ click&collect purchase											■		
Catalogue search→store purchase										■			
Catalogue search →online purchase for delivery													■
Catalogue search → click&collect purchase							■						
Three Channel Journeys													
Online search → telephone search →store purchase													■
Online search →store search → catalogue search →store purchase		■											
(WOM recommendation)→ Online search → telephone search →store search→ store purchase						■							

There is no clear relationship between the number of shopper journey configurations used

and the number of journeys recounted; for example, BE recounted a larger number of

shopper journeys than either CA or IV, but fewer configurations. Similarly, there is no clear relationship between the number of shopper journey configurations and participants' attitudes to shopping. LA recounted the largest number of journey configurations (7) and also demonstrated in her interview strong, positive attitudes towards shopping. However, JE and NI recounted equally large numbers of shopper journey configurations (6) but exhibited markedly differing attitudes to shopping with NI finding shopping to be a pleasurable activity and JE generally finding shopping to be a chore. It would appear, therefore, that type and variety of shopper journey configuration are not driven by attitude to shopping.

Participants varied in the extent to which they exhibited homogeneity of shopper journey configuration within product categories. Grocery shopper journeys were reported by 10 participants; IV, KY, ST and TR exhibited homogeneity, only ever buying groceries from the store channel, LA uses stores and markets, while the other 5 (BE, JE, MA, NI, SP) exhibit heterogeneity in using the online channel for some grocery shopper journeys and the store channel for others. Only SP uses the online channel regularly for grocery shopping, combining a weekly online shop with in-store top-up shops. BE and JE shop online for groceries when a special offer is available while MA and NI's online grocery shopping is situationally driven (e.g. Christmas, children's exam periods). No omnichannel journeys were reported for grocery shopping.

Clothing shopper journeys were reported by all participants except CL. BE, JE, IV, ST and TR (all male) only ever buy clothing from the store channel as they prefer to try on merchandise before purchase. RE is an omnichannel clothing shopper who exhibits homogeneity in his journey configurations; he buys the majority of his clothes from one retailer and uses their app to search for products and to check store availability before making a store visit to

purchase. The female participants exhibited more heterogeneity of clothing shopper journey configurations, though there is no clear relationship between the number and types of journeys reported and their attitudes to shopping for clothes. For example, CA actively dislikes shopping for clothes and, in addition, is generally on a tight budget. Her response is to construct multi-phase omnichannel journeys which allow her to check that she has found the most suitable product at the best price before committing to purchase in the hope of avoiding mistakes and shopping less in the long run. In contrast, MA buys designer clothing and luxury brands and her omnichannel, multi-phase shopper journeys are an enjoyable part of her overall shopping experience, allowing her to immerse herself in the luxury brand environment.

Beyond groceries and clothing, shopper journeys were reported for a wide range of product categories with some evidence of homogeneity but more evidence of heterogeneity both within and across product category. Homogeneity is demonstrated in the exclusive use of the online channel by IV to purchase vitamins and by KY to purchase printer cartridges, both relatively low involvement and low price products, but also by ST (camera enthusiast) to purchase expensive camera equipment and accessories. There are no clear relationships between homogeneity in journey configuration and product type, price or level of product involvement exhibited by participants.

Having examined participants' shopper journeys and their homogeneity and heterogeneity, participants' shopping-related and broader goals are now discussed.

Participants' goals

Participants were asked directly about their immediate shopping-related goals. Their higher-order, more abstract goals were identified through thematic analysis of interview content

where they spoke about themselves and their lives more broadly. Analysis of the content

relating to each shopper journey enabled the focal goal to be identified; in some shopper

journeys the focal goal was the shopping-related goal, but in others it was a higher-order

goal such as being entertained or getting exercise. Table 4 sets out the shopping-related

goal, higher-order goal(s) and focal goal associated with each participant's shopper

journeys; one journey has been selected for each participant on the basis of the emphasis

placed on that journey by the participant in their account.

Table 4: Examples of participants' shopper journeys and goals

Participant	Shopper Journey	Active Goals (*Focal goal shown in italics*)
BE	Buy jeans and shirts Store purchase	Avoiding crowds Saving time *Spending as little time as possible in shops*
CA	Buy a holiday Online search → store search → catalogue search → store purchase	Creating the perfect honeymoon experience Having enough money left over to meet other needs *Tailoring the holiday to their wishes, avoiding a packaged holiday*
CL	Buy a suitcase Store search → store purchase	Avoiding paying parking charges Making forthcoming trip easier *Shopping locally*
IV	Buy a duvet Store search → (WOM recommendation) → store purchase	*Avoiding being persuaded by salesperson to buy more expensive duvet than needed* Being a rational person Being a rational shopper Saving time and effort
JE	Buy fishing bait Store purchase	Being a smart shopper *Being part of the fishing community* Finding out about new fishing products Meeting other local fishers
KY	Buy a mobile phone (WOM recommendation) → Online search → telephone search → store search → store purchase	Being seen to have the right accessories to create image of competence Being taken seriously in the workplace as a competent achiever *Finding the HTC phone recommended by a colleague* Having a reason to visit a specific shopping mall
LA	Buy a dress for daughter Store purchase	Being the best daughter she can be Making her daughter look beautiful *Finding a dress in a store near her mother's home* Spending time with her mother on a shopping trip
MA	Buy groceries Store purchase	Create a pleasing world for herself and her children Feed family for the next week Inculcate in her children a love of good food *Involve her children in the planning and creation of meals*
NI	Buy bedroom furniture Online search → online purchase for delivery	Create comfortable bedroom Save time and effort *Use retailer vouchers*
RE	Buy boots Online search → store purchase	*Look good* Create a favourable image
SP	Buy latex-free swim socks for daughter Store search → online search → online purchase for delivery	*Avoid daughter having pain/suffering from allergic reaction* Enable daughter to attend swimming lessons
ST	Buy a travel bag Online search → store search → online purchase for delivery	Avoid having to check in luggage Avoid worry of lost luggage Find good quality bag with right features Find right size of bag to fit in plane's overhead luggage compartment *Save money* Save time
TR	Buy wine Online purchase for delivery	*Be a smart shopper* Drink good quality wine Save time

Tables 3 and 4 show that (a) participants configure their shopper journeys in heterogeneous ways, (b) that multiple goals are associated with any given shopper journey, and (c) the focal goal acting on the shopper is not necessarily the purchase of a specific item.

Having presented evidence of participants' shopper journeys and goals, goal theory is now used to examine the heterogeneous shopper journeys of a sub-set of participants.

Goal Theory and Shopper Journeys

Motivation theory, as generally applied in shopping behaviour research, assumes that a shopper has a fixed, stable and enduring motivation which applies across product categories and shopping situations. The shopper's motivation determines their perceptions of channel attributes and channel benefits which would in turn imply fixed and stable shopper journeys. However, this does not reflect what the research reported above has found: heterogeneous shopper journeys both across and within product categories which cannot be accounted for if the shopper's motivation is fixed and enduring. Rather, this heterogeneity arises from each journey reflecting an underlying set of goals.

Goal theory posits that individuals' goals are arranged hierarchically and at any point in time goals from different levels in the hierarchy, and therefore at different levels of abstraction, will be active in shaping behaviour. As shown in Table 5, applying Powers' (1973) hierarchy to selected participants' accounts of their shopper journeys, it is possible to explain why they configured the journeys in the way they did.

Table 5: Application of Powers' (1973) goal hierarchy to shopper journeys

Research Participant	System Goal	Principle Goal	Programme Goal	Shopper Journey
JE	Being part of the fishing community Being a good citizen	Meeting other local fishers	Prepare for weekend fishing trip	Visit to local specialist fishing store; chat to staff and customers; inspect new fishing equipment; buy bait
JE	Being part of the fishing community	Being a smart shopper	Prepare for weekend fishing trip	Buy frozen bait from specialist online retailer
KY	Be taken seriously in the workplace as a competent achiever	Improve knowledge of IT	Find books to read	Online search and purchase of books
KY	Be taken seriously in the workplace as a competent achiever	Dress appropriately at work to create image of competence	Get ideas of what to wear	Visit large shopping mall; see another shopper whose image KY admires; buy same dress as shopper is buying
LA	Being the best daughter and mother she can be	Spending time with her mother	Finding a new dress for her daughter	Buy a dress in store while on a trip to a shopping mall with her mother
LA	Being the best daughter and mother she can be	Spending as much time as possible with her daughter	Finding a new dress for her daughter	Buy a dress via a mobile app on her tablet after her children are asleep
MA	Creating a pleasing world for herself and her children	Inculcating in her children a love of good food	Involving her children in the planning and creation of meals	Buy groceries with her children in the local supermarket
MA	Creating a pleasing world for herself and her children	Avoiding family tension and stress at children's exam time by creating calm environment at home where they can revise	Maintaining good quality meals but minimising time out of home spent shopping	Buy groceries online
TR	Be a wine connoisseur	Expand knowledge of wine	Buy wine	Search catalogue of specialist wine members' club; online purchase from club website
TR	Be a wine connoisseur	Enjoy a day out in the local countryside with partner	Buy wine	Drive 30 miles to nearest branch of supermarket known for quality wines

Goals possess the properties of equifinality (multiple means to achieve a given goal) and multifinality (one means capable of achieving multiple goals). As such, the same underlying goal may be achieved by a number of different shopper journey configurations. Evidence of both equifinality and multifinality is found in the research data. JE's use of both the store channel and the online channel to purchase fishing supplies cannot be explained by a stable and enduring shopping motivation, but can be explained through an examination of his goals. Multifinality is exhibited when JE chooses to purchase fishing bait from a specialist store rather than purchasing it more cheaply online. The *programme* goal is to prepare for

his weekend fishing trip, but configuring his shopper journey in this particular way enables him to attain the *system* goal of being part of the fishing community via a subordinate *principle* goal of connecting with staff and fellow fishing customers in store, and it also allows him to attain a superordinate *system* goal of being a good citizen through patronising local, independent stores. Equifinality is exhibited when KY attains her *system* goal of being taken seriously in her workplace as a competent achiever via the subordinate *principle* goals of improving her knowledge of IT and dressing appropriately. These properties of equifinality and multifinality accommodate heterogeneity of multichannel shopper journey configuration which fixed, stable shopping motivation cannot do.

Goal theory suggests that at any point an individual will be seeking to attain multiple goals, one of which will be focal and the dominant driver of behaviour. The research findings indicate that the act of shopping was not always the focal goal acting on the participant and that the focal goal can exist at any level in the goal hierarchy. TR's decision to drive 30 miles to a town and while there to purchase wine in a store can be explained by his focal *principle* goal being the desire to have a day out with his partner enjoying a drive through the countryside. When TR chooses to spend time browsing through a wine club catalogue before buying from the club's online store, his focal goal is at *system* level – being a wine connoisseur. The changing nature and level of an individual's focal goal, therefore, would appear to account for the heterogeneity in shopper journey configuration.

The ability to integrate earlier research would strengthen the nomological validity of a goal theory perspective on shopping behaviour. Goals are considered to 'activate procedural knowledge' (Pintrich, 2000, p. 547) in order that the plan to attain the goal may be developed. This results in information selectivity in individuals (Huffman and Houston, 1993;

Locke and Latham, 2002) in that we process and retain only goal-relevant information. The information selectivity created in the process of goal attainment can explain why shoppers' attitudes to shopping channels and perceptions of their benefits are not fixed (Mattson, 1982); the shopper journey varies because channel attitudes and perceptions are filtered by the nature of the goal(s) being pursued.

Goal theory can explain the role of situational factors in shopping behaviour; a change in situation is likely to cause a change in or a re-evaluation of goals, and a consequent change in any shopping behaviour which the individual is engaged in around the time of the situation change. The change in shopping behaviour, such as a change in shopper journey configuration, is triggered by the situation change, but is specifically shaped by the goal change.

Goal theory allows for the incorporation of the shopping orientations examined by, for example, Stone (1954), Darden and Reynolds (1971), Brown et al. (2003), and the motivations identified by the extant research from Tauber (1972) to Ganesh et al. (2010). There is support for the view that orientation is related to higher level goals than motivation (Kim et al.,2014) but while both can account for the energization of behaviour, neither can account for its specific direction and shape. Shopping orientation and motivation can be conceptualised as part of a hierarchical goal system which comprises higher level, more enduring, *and* lower level, more situational and contextualised, goals thus answering the call made by Mooradian and Olver (1996) that the distinction between enduring and situational motivations be addressed. Goal theory removes this distinction, accommodating both higher and lower level drivers of behaviour in one theoretical framework and accounting for both the energization and the shaping of behaviour. The exploration of shopper journeys

presented here suggests that goal theory is able to explain not only why people shop, but why they exhibit heterogeneity in the ways in which they shop.

Conclusion

Shoppers exhibit some homogeneity but also considerable heterogeneity within and across product category in their shopper journey configuration. Shopping behaviour, as manifested in multichannel shopper journey configuration, appears to be shaped by multiple drivers (goals) operating at varying levels of abstraction. The higher level, more abstract, drivers may be relatively stable and enduring but the lower level drivers vary over time, place and context. Shopper journeys are configured around a focal goal, but that goal is not necessarily the shopping activity itself.

Evidence of fixed and stable shopping motivation is limited, suggesting that the dominant approach to investigating shopping behaviour is based on an unfounded assumption and that goals are a more appropriate conceptualisation of the drivers of shopping behaviour than either shopping motivation or shopping orientation. The inherent heterogeneity of goal-driven shopping behaviour may explain why such a diversity of shopping motivation taxonomies has been found; they are actually capturing different combinations of goals. The variety of goals driving shopping behaviour, and their varying levels of specificity, may also explain why shopping motivation and shopping orientation have been so often conflated by researchers; shopping orientation can best be seen as a higher level, more abstract goal, while what has been termed motivation has in fact captured a diverse and changing mix of lower-order goals. Goal theory, therefore, can accommodate past research findings based on both shopping orientation and shopping motivation, thus strengthening its nomological

validity and the case for its adoption as a more suitable theoretical basis for the examination of shopping behaviour.

Limitations and future research directions

Some limitations result from the research design. While participants were asked to describe their shopping-related goals, higher order goals were not asked for directly in the interviews but were inferred from the narrative accounts. This was a deliberate decision as it was felt that direct questions on abstract goals would introduce artificiality into the interviews and cause participants to become self-conscious. However, higher-order goals may have been missed or misinterpreted as a result of this indirect identification procedure. The use of self-report has inherent limitations; participants selected the shopper journeys to report and so their specific choice, and their recollections, may have been influenced by factors which they did not mention in their accounts.

Future research could build on the exploratory study reported here. Further qualitative research could be directed towards goal elicitation, replacing self-report with, for example, projective techniques or role play. Goals are seen as having 'tremendous utility in not only explaining but predicting behaviour' (Elliot, 2006, p113) and there is scope to conduct quantitative research to test relationships between shoppers' goals and shopping behaviour. Researchers could examine how the level of specificity of the focal goal governing a shopper journey affects the journey's precise configuration. The relationship between shopping goal clarity (Lee and Ariely, 2006) and shopper journey configuration could also be examined. Additionally, within the wider domain of consumer behaviour there is scope to examine the effect of multiple goals on consumers' decision and choices, rather than priming research participants with a single goal. A more realistic, naturalistic approach

to goal-based research is perhaps best achieved by means of the type of qualitative research

design adopted here.

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