MOTIVES FOR SHOPPING CHANNEL DECISIONS
A COMPARISON OF ONLINE AND OFFLINE SHOPPING BEHAVIOUR

WINKELS OF WEBSHOPS

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REFLECTION
This report forms the final product of a master thesis. Besides being a first introduction into scientific research, this master thesis has educational goals as well. This section therefore covers the reflection of the scientific process, aiding this learning process. Besides general limitations and further research this section will reflect as well on the research design and methodology.

**LIMITATIONS**

An important limitation is that the design of this research holds limited power to analyse the results of what characteristics are important during a specific shopping activity. For instance, the research cannot explain whether atmosphere is important while social shopping. The questionnaire merely inquired the attitude of respondents to a shopping channel based on their beliefs about characteristics or shopping activities. The questions did not inquire what characteristics are preferred when a certain type of shopping activity is performed.

Moreover the limited number of interviews and the absence of follow up interviews after the questionnaires offer little insight in why the relations provided by the quantitative analysis actually occur. The results give, for instance, no explanation on why social shopping sometimes shows favourable attitudes in the online channel. More research on this part could supply more insight in the mechanisms behind the relations. If such research would focus on specific shopping activities the relations between shopping activities and shop characteristics might become more explicit as well.

Finally, this research is limited in that it mainly researches the relation between attitude and shopping motives. The research cannot give hard conclusions about whether a positive attitude towards a specific shopping activity leads to performing that specific shopping activity. It might be that due to other reasons, not taken into account within this research, another kind of behaviour is performed. For instance, the social relations with friends might lead to the perceived pressure to engage in social shopping with that person, although the attitude towards this behaviour is unfavourable. An extended inquiry of such specific social norms on certain shopping activities might grant more insight into the reason whether certain shopping activities are actually performed.

**FURTHER RESEARCH**

This research was designed as a consumer study and focused on researching shopping behaviour. The results of this report could be a valuable contribution to the field of consumer behaviour due to the broad spectrum of aspects of shopping motives that was incorporated. A better understanding, however, has still to be developed on whether attitudes towards certain shopping activities are related to the performing these shopping activities. Moreover a better understanding has to be developed on how shopping activities and shop characteristics are related to each other. Future research could also focus on the relation of social norms and attitude with behavioural intention within a single shopping activity. Finally, the knowledge on how shopping motives differ between shopping sectors or between the stages of the shopping process can be further developed.

**REFLECTION ON RESEARCH DESIGN**

The contribution to the field of Real Estate & Housing, the field of study of this master thesis, is most likely limited. Real estate investors and developers can only influence some of the shop characteristics that are important within shopping behaviour. To give sound recommendations to investors and developers, the relation between shopping activities and these specific shop characteristics is of great importance. In this research a wide range of shop characteristics was taken into account, with limited attention towards the relation between shop characteristics and shopping activity. This limits the recommendations that can be provided to investors and developers.

In the preparation of this research the emphasis was on building a conceptual model which was comprehensive in the beliefs it incorporated. In other words approximately all different types of motives were incorporated. Reason to use such a holistic model was to be able to clearly distinct the motives for choosing one of the two shopping channels. Omitting one such motive could result in a bias towards other motives. The broadness, however, of this research has led to limited workable definitions of what characteristics of shopping centres are important in different cases of shopping. To arrive at such conclusions more in-depth knowledge is needed of the reasons behind the relations. From this viewpoint, a preferable research design would have been one in which for instance one shopping activity would form the central subject of analysis. The preferable characteristics for this type of
shopping activity within the two shopping channels could then have been discerned. Such an approach would also create the possibility of including the influence of shopping sectors and different types of store and online shop formats. The results of this research indicate that especially interesting shopping activities for further in-depth research would be social shopping and gratification shopping.

**REFLECTION ON METHODS**

Sampling of the respondents was done by means of business cards, distributed to visitors of shopping centres. The business card provided an URL to the site of the questionnaire. The card informed respondents as well that by filling out the questionnaire they would have a chance of winning a coupon worth €50, - at the Dutch webshop Bol.com. This reward could have provoked a bias in the results as filling out the questionnaire could have been more attractive to frequent customers of Bol.com than to others who do not favour this store. There might be a difference between customers of Bol.com and others, leading to a possible bias in the results.

The interviews and questionnaires were preceded by a literature review. From this literature review a framework of concepts and variables was build which was used to prepare the interviews and form a questionnaire. In defining this theoretical framework, there was, however, limited attention for creating sound hypotheses. Not all relations that were subject of analysis were predicted in hypotheses, and the hypotheses that were defined, had little power in defining the conclusions of the research. Omitting to create sound hypotheses does not necessarily limit a research. The process of analysis, however, would have benefitted of better hypotheses, as such hypotheses can guide the process and provide a basis for discussion.

Although the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behaviour, a more elaborated version of the TRA, proved its value in different sources of literature (Pookulangara et al., 2011a, 2011b; Soopramanien & Robertson, 2007; Srisuwan & Barnes, 2008; To et al., 2007, p. 776). The model has, however, received some criticism as well. This criticism is mainly focused on the limited focus of the model on learning, feedback, and the limited role for the environment, which is merely included as an extraneous passive factor. A larger model would have made this research to broad and complex. Still, it might be that the environment or the learning cycle of consumers has a significant impact on shopping as well. Further research could then be necessary on these topics.


