Online grocery shopping: Determinants of online impulse buying behavior

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14.3 Determinants of online impulse buying behavior

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14.1 Motivation

During the last years, sales in the online grocery business have increased steadily but on a rather small scale. Considering the total American market for grocery sales, online sales make up only 1 to 2 per cent (Jopson/Rappeport 2011 [12]). Big players like the brick-and-mortar retailers Tesco and Wal-Mart, and internet retailers such as Amazon experiment to find the best concepts serving customers needs and opening this sales channel to a broader target group. Even though, many customers are still hesitant whether they want to try online grocery shopping, this article focuses on customers that have already decided to buy online. In contrast to other studies, this article does not analyze the advantages and disadvantages of online grocery shopping and whether it is economically reasonable. The authors are confident that online grocery shopping will be established in near future and address the need to boost the amount of the average purchased shopping basket online. Especially impulse purchases which play a (crucial) role in brick-and-mortar stores could be lost due to less impulse factors in a regular online shop. In-store environment such as lighting, layout, smell and sound affects the consumer’s decision process and willingness to spend. Especially the transfer of the offline experience of grocery shopping to the online context is more difficult compared to other online shops. The characteristics of groceries complicate handling as there are a high number of products of fragile or perishable nature. Moreover food products are mostly not highly priced and have a low margin due to fierce price competition in the markets; thus profit must be also generated with quantity. Therefore the following article deals with the determinants and cues that influence online impulse buying behavior.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In the next section, basics of online grocery shopping and impulse buying behavior are shown. This is followed by the presentation of possible determinants of online impulse buying behavior. Divided into the three categories consumer characteristics, product characteristics and online store characteristics, the findings are summarized in a framework. A conclusion is provided at the end.

14.2 Basics of online grocery shopping and impulse buying behavior

14.2.1 Online grocery shopping in 2011

When shopping for groceries online a customer is mainly motivated by one factor: the wish for convenience. It offers the chance to shop at any time of the day and the week and leaving bulky items to the delivery staff. Nevertheless till today, many customers doubt whether this is a good way to buy groceries. Therefore online grocery shopping can be barely called a known and regular performed habit in most economies. In European countries