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Shoppers’ Motivations for E-shopping

This chapter is adapted from a paper delivered at the *International Conference on Recent Advances in Retailing and Services Science* (Dennis and Papamatthaiou 2003)\(^1\)

**Introduction**

The previous parts of this book have mainly concerned ‘Why people shop where they do?’ in terms of choices of (bricks) shopping centres. For the future, shopping centres are facing increasing competition from e-retailers. This part of the book addresses e-shopping. Firstly, this chapter explores shopper’s motivations for e-shopping rather than bricks (physical store) shopping.

Although several authors have commented on shoppers’ motivations (See Chapter 8 above and e.g. Bloch et al, 1994; Dawson et al, 1998; Roy, 1994; Wakefield and Baker, 1998; Westbrook and Black, 1985), to date there has been little research into motivations for e-shopping and little comparison with shopping centres. A number of the studies of ‘bricks’ shopping have drawn attention to the importance of higher level shopping motivations as compared to utilitarian ones such as products and prices. For example, the quantitative Study 1 in Chapter 8 above indicated that ‘Love’, ‘Self-esteem’, ‘Self-actualisation’ and ‘Accomplishment’ were more prevalent than conventional attributes such as ‘Variety of stores’ and ‘Compare brands and prices’. The qualitative Study 2 using six focus groups, found that the ‘good’ constructs

were higher order at a more attractive centre than at a less attractive one and *vice versa*. For ‘bricks’ shopping, entertainment has been demonstrated to be a component of image and a motivator for some shoppers (Sit et al, 2003). Many classifications of shopping motivations have been proposed, but commonly a distinction is drawn between lower level or utilitarian motivations as compared with higher level or hedonic ones (see Chapter 8 above and e.g. Babin et al, 1994).

According to ‘Wheel of retailing’ theory new formats such as e-retail enter the market on the basis of utilitarian offers and low prices (Dholakia and Uusitalo, 2002). Few studies have attempted to test this proposition by examining the extent to which e-shopping is motivated by price, although Foucault and Scheufele (2002), in a study of student textbook purchasing, found that price was not significantly associated with online buying. On the other hand, that study did indicate a strong link between talking about e-shopping with friends and intention to e-shop in the future.

Kolesar and Galbraith (2000) reviewed the importance of higher level needs such as personal interaction and control, pointing out that e-retailers have difficulty in satisfying customers needs for these. On the other hand, they pointed out that loyalty and affinity programmes can be successful in satisfying self-esteem and belonging needs. Their study, though, did not gather primary data. Rohm and Swaminathan (2004), in a study comparing a sample of e-shoppers with non-e-shoppers found that social interaction, variety seeking and convenience were all significant motivators for e-shopping. Recreation, although a motivator for bricks shopping, was not significant for e-shopping. Those authors concluded that e-shopping appealed more to functional shoppers than to recreational shoppers. This was consistent with the results of Lee’s and Tan’s (2003) experiment with 179 undergraduate participants. The study found that shoppers were more likely to shop in store for products/services high in purchase risks. The results, though, were statistically significant for services only as opposed to tangible products.

On the other hand, we consider that the variety seeking motivator is consistent with the substantial use of e-shopping for ‘hedonic’ goods and services such as books, music and travel. Childers and colleagues (2001) found enjoyment to be a strong predictor of attitude towards e-shopping. In that study, ‘usefulness’ and ‘enjoyment’ were equally predictive of attitude overall. Usefulness was the better predictor for grocery, enjoyment more so for the examples that the authors described as ‘hedonic’: Amazon, Hot Hot Hot (sauces), Wal-mart, K Mart and Bookstore.