

Designing the Shopping Experience of the Future: Results of a Qualitative Study with Shoppers of a Grocery Retail Store.

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Abstract

Improving shopper experience in the grocery retail environment is a topic that researchers and businesses are intensely dealing with for many years, as it adds value to shoppers in a promo-oriented industry. The use of modern in-store technologies targeting to support consumers in the purchasing procedure is mentioned in the literature, especially focusing on the use of portable electronic devices for providing innovative services, considering new technologies such as RFID and NFC. Many case studies include innovative services that offer valuable information for consumers such as product reviews, product information, recipes, personalized promotions, shopping lists and in general tend to provide utilitarian services to shoppers. To this end, we decided to study the acceptance level of services based on the upcoming beacon Bluetooth Low Energy technology that could be introduced in a grocery retail environment. Furthermore, our focus was to examine the attitude of shoppers towards personalized recommendations and enhanced experience services based on their physical location in the store. Our research included two qualitative studies with shoppers of a major grocery store chain. The first study included four focus groups with shoppers in order to collect shoppers' opinion, attitude and expectations regarding the given shopping experience. As it is common knowledge according to scientific literature that sometimes people's actual behavior is different than their statements in focus groups, we conducted a second ethnographic study with a selected number of participants of the first study, in order to validate the proposed ideas and discover the aforementioned gaps during their shopping journey. Both studies were based on a framework, developed by retailer's executives, proposing the points of interaction between the retailer and the shopper throughout the shopping experience. The results of both studies indicate that heavy mobile users expect from retailers to use new technologies in order to improve in-store experience, highlighting advanced concepts such as in-store navigation, product information interactive displays, automated queues etc. At the same time, shoppers are willing to provide additional personal data in order to receive personalized suggestions and promotions. Our research focused on loyal customers of the retailer who are heavy mobile users. All shoppers were aware of the observer during the ethnographic sessions. Shoppers' indications, proposals and all the extracted knowledge constitute the user requirements for the design of an advanced shopping assistant application that will improve shopping experience in grocery retail stores supporting different groups of shoppers. As a next step, the proposed service will be pilot tested in the grocery store in order to examine the added value.