Reconceptualising Buyer Behavior in the Digital Era: An Emergent Journey

Abstract

This paper undertakes a conceptual examination of the emergence of digital marketing in recent decades. It identifies a number of key trends in consumer behavior and manners in which the medium is evolving. The argument progresses to examine and challenge predominant conceptualisations of the buyer behaviour process and considers how these have been recast in the advent of digital technologies. This provides the backdrop to develop a novel diagrammatic representation of digital marketing buyer behaviour processes which can be tested empirically. The model is illustrated through the use of a vignette which points up the complexities which the model aims to represent. The paper concludes with an appeal for the continued development, modelling and empirical testing of the evolving world of digital buyer behaviour.

Keywords: Customer journey model, digital marketing, buyer behavior, retail, Internet, social media, consumer behaviour

Introduction

This paper undertakes an important conceptualization linked to pilot field investigations of buyer behavior in contemporary digital contexts. The paper evolved from a consultancy undertaken on behalf of a specialist advertising agency in a United Kingdom based university business school/commercial sector collaboration. The conceptual model that has emerged has potential international implications and applicability for digital business contexts.

Literature Review

Digital Marketing – Zeitgeist and Prospects

In the period between 2004 and 2013 the number of UK businesses trading via mail order or Internet retailing grew remarkably from 3,165 to 18,813, which was an increase amounting to

494.4%. Most of this growth can be accounted for by the rise in Internet retailers as existing bricks-and-mortar (traditional high-street stores) and mail order retailers moved online and by the growth of new pure-play (online only) enterprises (keynote.co.uk, 2016). Turnover increased in the sector by 122.9% between 2004 and 2013 from £9.94 billion to £22.16 billion and Gross Value Added rose from £1.73 billion to £4.04 billion over the same period (keynote.co.uk, 2016). Online retailing commands a greater share of retail sales in the UK in the pre-Christmas period. In November 2015 its share of total retail sales in the UK was 15.5%. Over the whole of 2015 online retailing accounted for 12.5% of total retail sales (academic.mintel,com, 2016a). The growth in the mail order and Internet retailing market in the UK has largely been driven by online innovation, increased Internet access and the rapid development of online shopping. Super-fast, fibre-optic broadband has spread rapidly across the UK and mobile connectivity has also increased significantly with Wi-Fi hotspots now covering most public places in large cities. Online sales are now thought to generate around 20% of all non-food retail sales in the UK (keynote.co.uk). The rapid uptake of smartphones and tablets is creating opportunities for retailers to develop mobile-friendly shopping websites and apps so that purchase can be made on the move. Smartphone apps can simplify and speed up the purchase process for consumers and they therefore satisfy demands for convenience (keynote.co.uk). Social media is integral to the lives of modern consumers and this is creating further opportunities for retailers to engage with their target markets. Facebook and twitter both began to trial 'buy' buttons in 2014 which permit consumers to purchase directly from advertisements and from posts or tweets. More developments in this direction are expected over the next few years (keynote.co.uk, 2016).

In March 2015 *eMarketer* forecast that in 2015 the United Kingdom (UK) would become the first country in the world where digital advertising expenditure would equate to 50% of total spending on advertising. In making this assessment *eMarketer* anticipated that total media sales in the UK would exceed £16.26 billion in 2015 (www.emarketer.com, 2015). A similar claim was also made in *The Marketer Magazine* (Gray, 2015). More recently, in March 2016, Mintel reported that digital advertising expenditure in the UK in 2015 amounted to £8.251 billion (academic.mintel.com, 2016b). On this basis, *eMarketer's* forecast that digital marketing expenditure would amount to 50% of total advertising spend in the UK in 2015 may well have proved to be accurate. However, as a *caveat*, Mintel reported that digital advertising in the UK accounted for only about 40% of total advertising expenditure

(academic.mintel.com, 2016b).   This suggests that total advertising expenditure in the UK in 2015 was higher than *the eMarketer* had anticipated and that the UK may not, in fact, be the first country in the world where digital advertising expenditure equates to 50% of total spending on advertising. Whatever such marginal variations (albeit seemingly substantive), the key emergent and prescient issue is that the growing impact of digital marketing is a potent and highly significant phenomenon which merits urgent attention.

Digital advertising in the UK grew by 15% between 2014 and 2015 partly due to the rise in online video consumption but also due to a shift towards mobile devices (e.g. smartphones and tablets). According to Mintel this latter factor is responsible for almost 80% of the rise in digital advertising as brands have sought to engage the 'always connected' consumer. Mintel predict that digital advertising in the UK will rise from c. £8.3 billion in 2015 to over £14.1 billion by 2020 (academic.mintel.com, 2016c). As a consequence, digital advertisers now have more options open to them. Previously restricted to banner advertisements, pop-ups and mailshots but they now have more ways to connect with consumers across a number of platforms. For example, Mintel found that video advertisements which can include pre-roll adverts shown on YouTube and commercials shown during breaks in online TV programmes were recalled by 40% of consumers over the previous three months. This figure is only slightly less than the 45% consumers who recalled seeing display adverts (e.g. banners and pop-ups) and those who recalled e mail advertising (42%). In addition, some 41% of social media users recalled seeing adverts (e.g. promoted Tweets and sponsored posts on Facebook) across these media (academic.mintel.com, 2016b). A considerable barrier exists for mobile advertisers in relation to screen size with 57% of smartphone users reporting that they would be unlikely to click on adverts because their screen size is too small to view them properly. However the move towards larger handsets (sometimes known as 'phablets' – smartphones with a screen size of at least 5 inches) has substantially mitigated this tendency (academic.mintel.com, 2016b). Consumers have also voiced concerns about the risk of advertising videos using up undue amounts of their contracted data allowance and the impact that these videos have on battery life (academic.mintel.com, 2016b). Some unease is also evident amongst consumers over the ways in which brands track their online activity. This tracking is apparent when adverts appear for products that have recently been the subject of searches. However, many of those who expressed concern about the tracking of their online activity report that they would rather see targeted adverts than more generic ones

(academic.mintel.com, 2016b). Most consumers who are prepared to pay for digital media services state that they are also open to pay for services that include advertising although they report that they would pay a little more for services that were free of adverts (academic.mintel.com, 2016b). As more communication appears to be moving towards mobile-friendly social media and instant messaging apps it is incumbent upon brands to consider how they can engage with target groups through these channels (academic.mintel.com, 2016b). Mintel surveys digital trends across five European countries on a quarterly basis including France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the U.K. In a recent report, although nearly 70% of consumers across the five European countries now access the internet via a smartphone access to these devices is not uniform. The highest levels of smartphone access are found in Spain (81%) and in Italy (76%). Corresponding figures for the other countries are France 54%, Germany 63% and the UK 66% (academic.mintel.com, 2016c). Internet access via a tablet is highest in the UK (44%), followed by Spain (43%), Italy (41%), Germany (37%) and France (32%) (academic.mintel.com, 2016c).

Most consumers access at least three different information sources to assimilate product information. This is particularly the case with those who are aged 16-35 and also with those parents whose children are under 16 years of age. These groups tend to prefer to access digital channels e.g. smartphone browsing, social media and mobile apps (academic.mintel.com, 2015b). Mintel found that the 2000 internet users aged 16 or older in their study accessed brand websites more than any other source and they found this information source to be the most useful, visiting physical stores and accessing review websites were seen to be the next most important information sources followed by general review websites in third place (academic.mintel.com, 2015b).

Concerns over privacy and the dissemination of personal data were important factors for 80% of respondents in the study and 19% reported that it was intrusive to receive a message on their smartphones from a company when they were near one of the company's stores. This implies that relatively few in the UK are yet ready for location-based marketing messages (academic.mintel.com, 2015b).

In Mintel's study nearly 70% of respondents preferred to learn about special offers via e mail but those aged 16 to 35 and those whose children were aged 16 or under expressed some

interest in social media posts and pop-ups on smartphones were acceptable to nearly 10% of this group when they were near a store (academic.mintel.com, 2015b). Mintel concluded that the evidence showed that the greatest route to success in retail lay in the integration of online and offline channels (academic.mintel.com, 2015b).

According to Mintel some people still believe that online retail will come to dominate shopping and there are yet others who prioritise success on social media over sales (academic.mintel.com, 2016a).   However, a key development took place in the final quarter of 2015 when the apparently unstoppable rise of the pure play retailers arrested and they actually lost market share in online sales. Pure players can offer a broad range and convenient shopping but they have only one dimension compared to bricks-and-mortar stores because they can only trade online. By contrast, bricks-and-mortar stores are more flexible because they can adopt a multi-channel approach (academic.mintel, 2016a) Mintel report that the most commonly quoted reason for buying online (55%) of respondents is because prices are perceived to be lower but almost as many (49%) cite convenience (academic.mintel.com, 2016a). Mintel do not believe that over the long term online retailers will be able to offer lower prices than their competition. Although they do not have to finance the costs of a physical store they have to spend heavily to promote their website and it is becoming apparent that this can cost rather more than it does to finance physical stores. Mintel believe that online shopping is actually strengthening the British high street rather than weakening it (academic.mintel.com, 2016a). Nevertheless, this may apply only to those larger stores who have the resources to offer their wares via an integrated multi-channel approach.

Innovations in delivery are offering online shoppers more options with click-and-collect services allowing shoppers to place an order which can then be delivered to a local store or pick-up-point for more convenient collection as an alternative to home delivery. Some pick-up points offer temperature-controlled lockers and others offer drive-through collection. Most of the leading UK supermarkets have partnered with Transport for London to offer collection lockers at a number of London Underground stations (keynote.co.uk). In addition to obviating the need for online customers to remain at home waiting for deliveries these developments can produce savings for retailers by reducing missed deliveries and repeat deliveries. The company Amazon is currently testing delivery drones in the US and the UK and these have the potential to deliver orders within 30 minutes of the order having been

placed. They are also likely to reduce costs because they will reduce the need for delivery drivers and they will be friendlier to the environment when compared with delivery vans (keynote.co.uk).

However, returns are a problem area for online clothing retailers with 37% of online clothes shoppers reporting that they have returned items in the last year (academic.mintel.com, 2015) .In relation to this, young people are the largest group of clothing shoppers and although they apparently still like to visit stores they have overtaken 25-34 year olds as the biggest group of online clothes shoppers (academic.mintel.com, 2015). Online returns are at a high level with young women who are aged 16-24 and this is affecting young fashion retailers who target women. It is reported that 54% of this group have returned items that they have purchased online over the last 12 months (academic.mintel.com, 2015). Almost a quarter of young women aged 16-24 returned online clothes purchases because they were not as depicted online. Although there have been many improvements online sites in recent years there appears to be remaining scope for further development in the use of zoom technology, 360 degree angle images and video images so that consumers can obtain more comprehensive views of prospective purchase (academic.mintel.com, 2015).

Retailers who, in the past, largely targeted women e.g. River Island and New Look have increasingly switched their attention to men because only 31% of all male online shoppers and 41% of male shoppers who are aged between 16 and 24 returned clothes bought online.
It appears that men are rather less likely to return clothes bought online than women as a result of poor fit, because the clothes don't suit them or as a result of them not liking the fabric. Poor fit is the reason why nearly half of female online shoppers return clothes. This has led retailers to trial different methods to remedy this. House of Fraser is introducing TrueFit which appears on the website when consumers are making a size selection. Arcadia is experimenting with a tool called Virtusize which aligns the fit of online clothes to retailers and brands that the customer is familiar with. In addition the tool offers fitting advice based on styling requirements and body shape (academic.mintel.com, 2015).

Thus, it is important to develop a good understanding of the customer journey in order to stimulate repeat purchases, to encourage more frequent purchases and to generate more revenue from individual consumers over time (Helmsley, 2016). If marketers have

knowledge of the point that consumers are at in their purchase decision process they are better able to communicate with their consumers in order to influence their decision-making. It is particularly important to have a knowledge of key online and offline touchpoints and the channels that consumers prefer if their needs and preferences are to be satisfied (Helmsley, 2016). Moreover, Helmsley (2016) cites a study by Aimia, who are a global loyalty management company, when he reports that poorly directed communications are causing nearly 70% of Britons to close down accounts and subscriptions and to 'unfriend' companies. Furthermore, Capgemini Consulting undertook a study into loyalty programmes which examined 160 different companies across seven different sectors. The study analysed 40,000 different consumer conversations on social media.   The survey found widespread dissatisfaction with loyalty programmes and the lack of a seamless multi-channel experience was one of the main reasons for this with around one third of respondents citing this as the reason for their dissatisfaction. In the study less than 10% of loyalty programmes offered point redemption across all channels but if they are to be commercially successful Capgemini argue that such programmes need to engage consumers at every touchpoint (uk.capgemini.com, 2016). Clark (2013) approaches a definition of the customer journey when he states that 'The customer journey represents different touchpoints that characterise a person's interaction with a brand, product or service of interest'. He goes on to criticise corporate centred viewpoints that assume customer journeys to be linear because they fail to reflect the individuality and complexity of individual customer journeys (Clark, 2013). In this vein, Helmsley (2016) stresses that, in particular, clothing brands need to be attuned to changes in consumer fashions and to be aware of how people shop and view products. In support of this Helmsley notes that London brand JW Anderson recently streamed a new men's collection on the gay social network app Grindr. This was apparently the first time that this had occurred in fashion show marketing and Diesel has followed up by advertising on both Grindr and on the dating site Tinder (Helmsley, 2016).

Also, Rawson et al (2013) argue that concentration on specific touchpoint performance is wrong and that the full consumer decision-making journey should be the focus. They argue that companies can excel in their individual interactions with customers but they can fail to consolidate their success in a holistic manner because different parts of the company deal with different aspects of service delivery. In looking at performance in the pay TV and insurance industries the authors found that the majority of companies performed well at

touchpoints but that a focus on, and understanding of, the whole customer decision-making journey was associated with higher revenues, repeat purchases, lower customer turnover/loss and positive word-of-mouth outcomes (Rawson et al, 2013).

Wolny and Charoensuksai (2014) refer to three types of behavior associated with consumer decision-making in the digital age. They term these, Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT), Showrooming and Webrooming underlining that:

> 'Existing consumer decision-making models were developed in pre-internet days and have remained for the most part unquestioned in the digital marketing discourse' (Wolny and Charoensuksai, 2014).

ZMOT describes the first encounter a consumer has with a product or service via various social media networks. This term was apparently first introduced by Lecinski and it means 'a decision-making moment that takes place a hundred million times a day on mobile phones, laptops and wired devices of all kinds. It is a moment where marketing happens, where information happens and where consumers make choices that affect the success and failure of nearly every brand in the world' (Lecinski, 2011 cited in Wolny and Charoensuksai, 2014, p. 318). Alternatively, showrooming occurs when a consumer views a product in a bricks-and-mortar store but then elects to buy it online possibly as a result of a more favourable price and webrooming is the opposite of showrooming in that the research is conducted online but the actual purchase is made in a bricks-and-mortar store (Wolny and Charoensuksai, 2014). Such behaviours are commonplace and gaining an understanding them is of crucial importance to marketers but producing an offering which is accessibly, favourably and accurately communicated across multiple channels presents challenges for brands. The argument has mapped out the issues and contexts that shape and inform the digital content in the UK and has broached a number of ideas in relation to how these are understood. The next stage of the discussion considers further the appropriateness of this conceptualization and the manner in which the field may be developed.

Reconceptualising Models of Buyer Behaviour for a Digital Era

Given the above outlined context, this paper argues that the *conceptual* understanding of buyer decision-making processes appears to be lagging behind that of modern digital marketing. Perhaps a striking illustration of this is the manner in which many highly regarded undergraduate textbooks depict what is variously described as the 'buyer decision process', 'the consumer decision-making process', 'the simple buying model', 'the consumer proposition acquisition process' or 'the sales or conversion funnel model'. Instances include, but are not limited to, for example: Kotler et al's (2012) *Principles of Marketing*; Fahy and Jobber's (2012) *Foundations of Marketing*; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick's (2013) *Principles and Practice of Marketing*; McNeil, Lamb and Hair's (2011) *Introduction to Marketing*; Bains, Fill; and, Page's (2011) *Marketing* and Charlesworth's (2015) *Digital Marketing*. Albeit variously visually expressed either horizontally, vertically or step-by-step, all of these texts present the buyer decision-making model with what constitutes essentially a *linear* format. Various terms employed to characterize the different stages or phases along these linear trajectories include, for example: 'need recognition', 'information search', 'evaluation of alternatives' and 'purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour' are used in the models. The traditional buyer decision-making model indicated in Figure 1 illustrates the typical linear representation used in the above mentioned textbooks. According to Charlesworth (2015) such models derive from the much employed AIDA concept (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action). This model was developed in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and was popularised by E.K. Strong in his book 'The Psychology of Selling' which was published in 1925 (Charlesworth, 2015).

Figure 1 The traditional buyer decision-making model based on the AIDA concept

In the contemporary digital age, the currency of such models would seem questionable. For instance, to take the above representation, the modern sales and decision-making process is prone to being characterized as 'Digital Darwinism', an expression that is thought to have first been coined within the title of a book by Schwartz in 1999. The futurist, Brian Solis (2016), highlights the pandemic nature of Digital Darwinism and its paradoxical levels of obsolescence and growth within technological capabilities. Solis suggests that Digital Darwinism is 'the phenomenon where technology and society evolve faster than an organization can adapt' (briansolis.com, 2016). As gaps continue to evolve and emerge in terms of technology, business resources and capabilities, the digital age persists in shifting and adapting consumer behaviour and decision-making process.

The consumer decision-making journey, its complexities and issues related to mapping that complexity, poses numerous and continuous challenges for the conventional views of

marketers. Indeed, obtaining insight into the behavioural processes of potential consumers so that meaningful interventions may be created at key stages in the decision-making process is essential to building competitive advantage. This is no different when it comes to digital marketing. Changes within digital marketing are well-documented and Edelman (2010) has assisted in moving away from predominant linear thinking through the proposal of, for instance, a new 'consumer decision journey'. Moreover, this growing comprehension is paralleled in the UK retail operational context, where many of the most successful UK 'high street retailers' e.g. Topshop, John Lewis and Marks and Spencer now understand that consumers frequently combine online and offline resources when making their purchase decisions. Consequently, such retailers have focused on a multi-channel approach which has been found to be effective because it allows customers to evaluate and purchase goods both online and/or in-store.

The present paper conceptually re-examines the digital marketing phenomenon with a view to reconceptualising and remodelling the evolving customer decision making journey. This is achieved through the generation of a model that can be subjected to repeated empirical testing of its adaptive applicability within the retail sector. The model is evolved as a conceptually founded response to the paucity of up-to-date and relevant alternatives and is termed the Customer Journey Model (CJM) and it mapped out in Figure 2. The CJM is a timely response to the issues and factors identified in the literature and the emergent model is designed to be a more up-to-date and relevant model of the customer journey in the digital age than traditional linear models. The model has relevance for marketers, online retailers and academics. The CJM shows that purchase decisions can be influenced by multi-faceted online and offline stimuli. The CJM also offers retailers a broader and richer understanding of the consumer decision-making process and that, armed with this knowledge, it will be possible to refine and personalize their offerings to more effectively anticipate and meet the needs of individual customers - a better understanding of specific customer needs is likely to create opportunities to increase profitability. Moreover, it is important to signal a point regarding the issue of 'degree of involvement' in the purchase. Because CJM embraces a wide range of purchase process elements, it is likely to operate better for high to medium involvement e.g. a car or an expensive item of clothing less so for a low involvement purchase such as a bottle of milk.
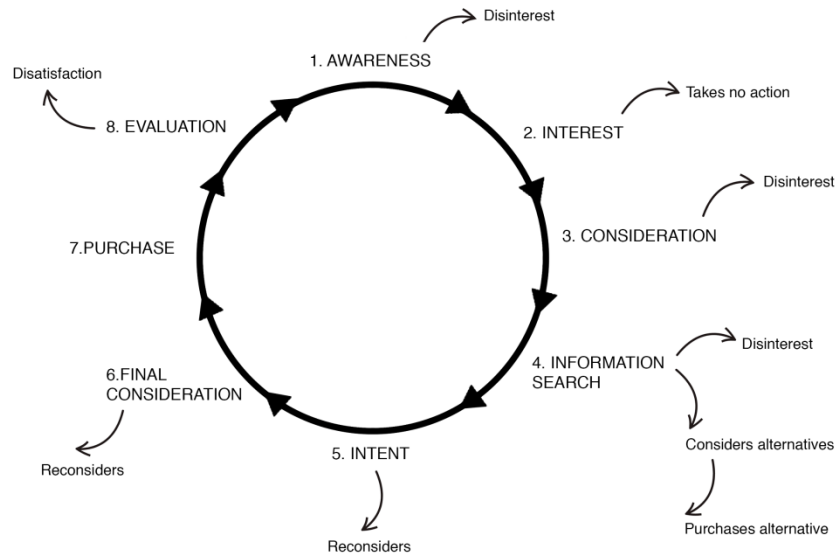
Figure 3 Customer journey model for the digital age (Tamsin Scott, 2015)

The following apocryphal vignette ('Maya buys a dress') is apposite in the context of the proposed diagram because although it is hypothetical it is illustrative of how a decision to purchase a fashion item, in this case a dress, might be made. The account demonstrates how an initial awareness of the possibilities develops into interest, consideration of the practicalities, information search, intent, final consideration, actual purchase and post-purchase evaluation as depicted in the CJM model (Figure 2). Throughout the process the consumer (Maya) is exposed to, or overtly seeks out, a variety of online and offline information sources and at almost any point within the consumer journey a decision could have decided to abandon or defer the purchase for any number of different reasons.

Figure 3: Maya buys a dress

Maya is a fashion conscious economics student at a leading British university with a lucrative part-time job and generous and wealthy parents. Fashion is important to her and it is an integral part of her lifestyle. She tends to spend around £300 a month on clothing and accessories. For the most part, Maya tries to emulate celebrity style and the latest catwalk trends whilst on a high street budget. She is brand sensitive to a degree but tends to favour

quantity over quality when it comes to fashion purchases, opting for the latest key trend pieces rather than classic designs. She keeps up-to-date with fashion trends by reading fashion blogs, following her style icons on Instagram and she reads fashion magazines occasionally. Her peers are also highly influential in her fashion purchase decisions. Maya makes around half of her fashion purchases online and the other half in bricks-and-mortar stores. It is also not uncommon for her to try on outfits in bricks-and-mortar stores and then complete the purchase online in a bid to find the lowest price. Maya will also engage in "virtual window shopping", checking out outfits on mobile sites during lectures then heading to the store between classes.

Whilst discussing an upcoming event, one of her friends sends Maya a link to a dress on a website via Facebook chat. She views the dress on her smartphone. Maya gives her friend her feedback on the dress and continues to look at the site. She does not find anything that interests her greatly so she leaves the site to visit another one. On the new site she spots some jeans she likes and proceeds to add them to her "wish list" and continues to search online, chat on social media and also looks at some sites related to her coursework. A few hours later as Maya is searching some other sites, behavioural retargeting ads* in the form of banners are displayed to her. One of the banners includes an image of one of the pairs of jeans she added to her wish list with a 20% discount offered on the original price. Her interest has been stimulated once more and she returns to the webpage to check out the offer. Whilst navigating the site she becomes distracted by the shoe collection on the site, finds a pair she likes and adds them to her shopping basket along with the jeans that originally attracted her and she completes the purchase.

Several days later Maya receives the order at her home address. Inside the parcel she receives a code that entitles her to free next day delivery if she places an order through the website within the next seven days. She quickly checks the site again to see if anything interests her and upon discovering that the site has no new stock she gives the code to a friend. Her friend orders an outfit from the site for the event they will be attending together in a few weeks' time. Maya however has yet to make her selection. She has an idea of what she is looking for as she saw a fashion blogger wearing a dress she liked in a YouTube video. She asked the blogger in the comments section where she bought the dress. The blogger informs her that the dress is from an American company but Maya researches the company

and she finds that it does not deliver to the United Kingdom. She continues searching for the perfect outfit on some of her favourite websites. She spots some dresses by a fashion retailer on Facebook as part of a social media campaign and proceeds to check out the site. Maya isn't familiar with the brand, so she decides to check out some consumer reviews online and upon discovering a few negative reviews particularly regarding sizing and fit she decides against the purchase. The following day Maya goes shopping in the city centre with some of the girls from her university course. She tries on a few styles in several shops and after hesitating for a while about the right colour to choose she is prompted to purchase a green dress on the advice of her friends.

*Behavioural retargeting is a type of online advertising that displays ads to users based on their previous searches and webpage visits.

Digital media present advantages that are not generally evident with other media in that it offers marketers with the opportunity to target at an individual level (academic.mintel.com, 2016b). Marketers must manage this opportunity to segment at the individual level so that a fine balance is achieved between the generation of promotional content that is relevant and specifically targeted towards individuals without compromising the privacy of those individuals (academic.mintel.com, 2016b). A better understanding of the customer decision-making process can assist in the achievement of this fine balance. This segmentation at the level of the individual also presents marketers with an opportunity to demonstrate return on marketing investment which was hitherto unavailable with less targeted campaigns.

Consumers are free to choose the ways in which they access information about products and services and there are often many online and offline ways for them to do to this (e.g. ZMOT, showrooming and webrooming) but comparatively little attention has been given to this subject area within the context of consumer decision making (Wolny and Charoensuksai, 2014). Wolny and Charosensuksai (2014) draw a distinction between the customer decision-making process and the customer journey and they argue that these terms must be clarified. In their view one of the best known consumer buying process models is the 'five-stage consumer decision-making process' which progressively involves 'need recognition, information searches, alternative evaluation, purchase and post-purchase' elements (Wolny

and Charosensukai, p. 319). This model is sometimes known as the EBM model which derived from the EKB model (Teo and Yeong, 2003). These models have previously been applied to online shopping (Darley et al, 2010, Teo and Yeong, 2003) and according to Wolny and Charosensuksai (2014) the five stage consumer decision-making process best describes high involvement purchases which tend to be longer processes than more routine purchases. Wolny and Charosensuksai (2014) compare the differences between customer journeys and decision making models. In their estimation customer journeys include all the touchpoints and channels that customers utilise throughout their shopping experience whereas decision making models are organized into hierarchical stages.   Furthermore customer journeys have a non-linear form whereas decision making models have a linear form and finally customer journeys are the result of cognitive, emotional and behavioural factors whilst decision making models only reflect cognitive factors. Wolny and Charosensuksai (2014) researched the behavior of women shopping for cosmetics using a multi-method approach. They found that different channels were used at different stages in the purchase process. Initially during the stage that Wolny and Charosensuksai termed orientation/inspiration/horizon scanning the respondents did not consider themselves to be shopping as they were merely scanning the available options in the context of their previous experience. At this point the respondents sought information from friends, bloggers, product reviews, videos (from social networks), magazines, product displays (both in stores and online) and they drew on their previous experience. During the next stage of information search the respondents have a clear intention to actively shop and they purposively sought more specific information. The channels they used were blogs, videos, review sites and friends. At the evaluation stage the respondents refined their choices and sought further information on prices, availability and purchase options. Products were sampled in retail outlets and the respondents also browsed products online. Physical and online stores were visited, mobile channels were utilised, friends were consulted and social media were used to confirm opinions. At the purchase stage bricks-and-mortar stores were generally preferred for final purchases but some shopping was undertaken online. During the post-purchase phase the respondents tended to relate their shopping experience on a traditional word-of-mouth basis although some post-purchase posting was reported on social media. Whilst the patterns of behavior discussed above broadly accord with the CJM model illustrated earlier it may be that the consumer journey differs slightly in the case of cosmetics compared to other purchases because, as Wolny and Charosensuksai (2014) observe, policy determines that

product returns are limited if the packaging has been opened. Consequently viewing the product physically mitigates the need to return it even if the ultimate purchase is made online.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper has surveyed the contemporary digital retail landscape in the UK. A range of transforming product configurations, technologies and resultant buyer behavior were analysed. Balanced against these evolving factors, the paper considered the manner in which buyer behaviour has been largely hitherto conceptualized and understand. The linear nature of traditional buyer behavior representations seem lacking in the face of the complexities of the emerging contexts. The argument developed and introduced a novel model – The Customer Journey Model (CJM) with which to attempt to account for the multifarious factors presented by digital buying behaviours as a prelude to empirical field tests. The paper thus presents a context, a problem and a response to a dynamic and challenging marketing and technological challenge. As the empirical phases of the work unfold the model will adjust and be reconfigured so as to reflect the changing nature of digital developments. Such a model can provide have valuable utility and implications for enhancing managerial practice by rendering organizational responses more sensitive and understanding to buyer behavior in the digital era.

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