COLLOQUIUM ON EUROPEAN RESEARCH IN RETAILING

BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

Abstracts and articles presented at the sixth CERR

Sophia Antipolis
July 15 - 17 2021

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Colloquium on European Research in Retailing

15 – 17 July 2021

Introduction

This sixth edition of the CERR has taken place in the SKEMA Business School campus of Sophia Antipolis. The topic for this edition follows upon the COVID-19 pandemic which has affected all economies worldwide. This pandemic will have long-lasting effects in most retail activities worldwide. Our role as researchers and scholars is to try both to understand such effects and to help firms, especially in the retailing domain, in overcoming the impacts in their operations and in their marketing.

This is why we have dedicated this now yearly event to the special theme "Building Resilience in Retail for the post COVID World – Marketing & Operations Perspectives".

We are glad to report that this theme has enjoyed massive support and that 58 submissions have been presented to address such issues. They represent the cutting edge of research in retailing. This book of Proceedings presents these works for your perusal. We hope that these works will spark even further interest in building the necessary knowledge and managerial tools to overcome the effects of this pandemic and prepare firms in retail and logistics for any new event of this kind in the future.

The works have been grouped by topic, ranging from retail operations, shopper behaviour, retail branding, multi- and omni-channel distribution, corporate social responsibility, supply chain management, etc. The list of presenters and an index of authors are included at the end.

We hope you enjoy this book.

Sophia Antipolis, 13 July 2021

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GROCERY SHOPPING BEHAVIOUR: CLASSIC DRIVERS AND COVID-19 EFFECT

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Keywords

Shopper behaviour, store preference, Attitude Towards COVID-19 Pandemic, convenience, mobile payment

Introduction

In 2020, the world was hit by a terrible pandemic. In a few months, the Chinese health emergency linked to the spread of COVID-19 has evolved into a global pandemic. This event has led to a humanitarian, social and economic crisis whose effects are still difficult to assess (Laborde *et al*., 2020; Martin *et al*., 2020; McKibbin and Fernando, 2020a and 2020b; Lucchese and Pianta, 2020).

Restrictions due to the coronavirus emergency imposed people to stay at home and socially isolate themselves to prevent being infected (Rossi *et al*., 2020). This certainly had

repercussions on the individual inner and social sphere, but also on purchasing behavior, giving a huge boost to the spread of e-commerce. During the lockdown, the consumers' use of the online channel has become a need and many companies have suddenly changed their habits to implement practices aimed at smart ways of interaction and at digitizing business processes. The spreading of the e-commerce has also affected the grocery sector, where the online sales were developing more slowly until that moment in many countries.

These circumstances also involved Italy where, starting from the end of February 2020, the Government had taken extraordinary measures to contain the virus circulation. The consumer goods companies were subjected to an incredible 'stress test': on the one hand, they have had to cope with massive waves of physical store purchases; on the other hand, they experienced a very rapid acceleration of sales through the online channel (IRI, 2020).

Moreover, regardless of the pandemic, the development of digital technologies during the last decade has allowed consumers to experiment new services and methods of collecting information (e.g., mobile app, mobile payment, click and collect, home delivery, assortment customization, social commerce) which can influence their decision-making process (Aiolfi and Bellini, 2019; Jara *et al*., 2018; Jih, 2007; Thirumalai and Sinha, 2011).

Another interesting phenomenon that affected the Italian grocery market in 2020 was the strengthening of local and neighborhood retail rediscovered by consumers during the lockdown resulting in an increased attention to the short supply chain, the quality of raw materials and the environment. The new retail landscape may have a significant impact in terms of increasing market share for some physical retail formats and local companies, as well as the importance that consumers attribute to the classic drivers of grocery shopping behaviour (convenience, price, assortment, communication).

Finally, the pandemic has triggered the third and most serious economic and social crisis since the start of the new millennium, after 11 September 2011 and the Great Recession of 2007-2011 (OECD, 2020). Consequently, individuals might be affected by the economic crisis resulting into greater attention to price saving in their shopping processes.

All these evidences raise relevant questions regarding the current and future market dynamics and, generally, the global crisis due to the pandemic (Ashraf, 2020; Maital and Barzani, 2020; McKibbin and Fernando, 2020a; 2020b; Nicola *et al*., 2020; Statista, 2020; World Bank, 2020).

Purpose

The present study is the first investigation of a wider ongoing research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumer and purchase behavior. The changes occurred in the ways of interaction between companies and consumers, in the channel dynamics as well as in daily purchasing behaviors due to social containment measures, make interesting to understand if and how consumers' shopping behaviors have changed and which factors affect such behaviors.

Specifically, the study intends to investigate the effect of some important classic drivers of physical retail channel choice (price, assortment, convenience and communication), already tested and validated in literature (Valentini *et al*., 2011; Yu *et al*., 20111), and of the most recent service components (such as mobile payment) on store preference. Contextually, in order to understand the effect of concern about health risks linked to the COVID-19 the study takes into considerations the attitude towards COVID-19 pandemic and the perceived risk towards shopping in offline stores.

Conceptual framework

Our conceptual framework, derived from literature on consumer behavior, bases on the following hypothesis (see Figure 1):

H1: The higher the importance of convenience, the higher the store preference

H2: The higher the importance of assortment, the higher the store preference

H3: The higher the importance of price convenience, the higher the store preference

H4: The higher the efficacy of communication, the higher the store preference

H5: The higher the importance of mobile payment, the higher the store preference

H6: The higher the store preference, the higher the repurchase intention

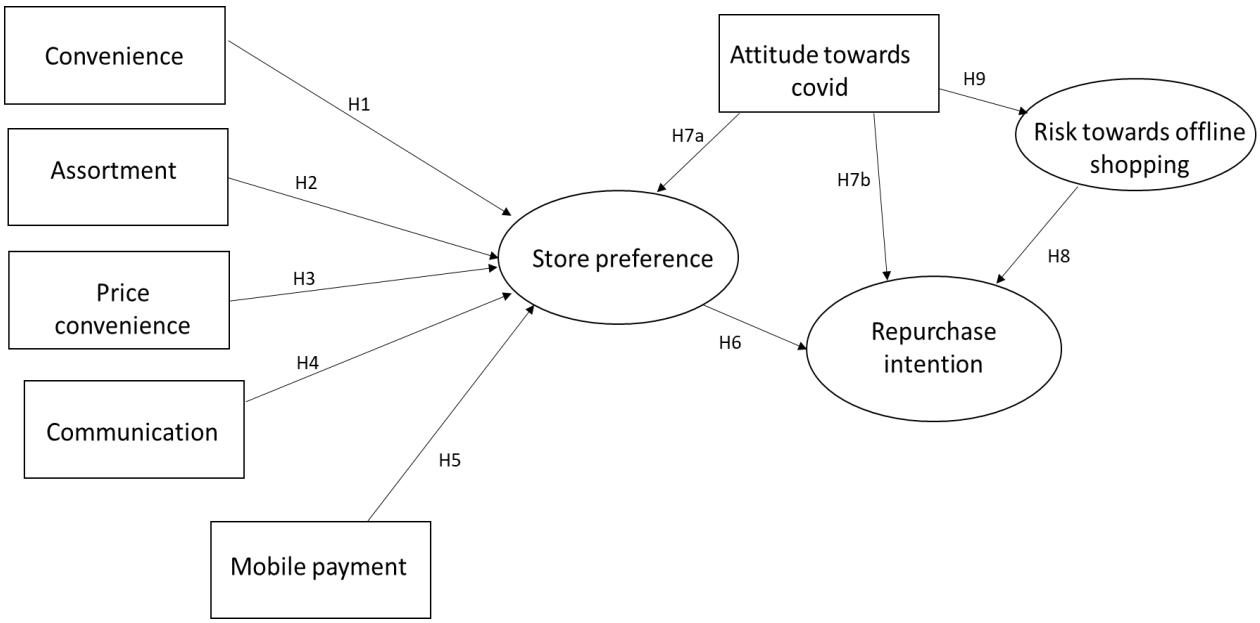
H7a: The higher the attitude towards COVID-19, the higher the store preference

H7b: The higher the attitude towards COVID-19, the lower the repurchase intention

H8: The higher the perception of risk towards offline shopping, the lower the repurchase intention

H9: The higher the attitude towards COVID-19, the higher the risk towards offline shopping

Figure 1 Conceptual framework



Methodology

Sample

To test the proposed model, an online self-administered questionnaire was filled by a sample of Italian consumers. Data were collected in October 2020 using the free software Google Forms. Respondents were immediately asked if they were responsible for family grocery

shopping. Only those who answered 'yes' were able to complete the questionnaire. The final sample size was 636.

Measures

Measures for the various variables have been adapted from previous research, with some modifications made to adapt to the research context. Convenience was measured through the 7-item scale developed by Saegert *et al*. (1985). Measure for assortment consisted of four items adapted from Homburg *et al*. (2002) and Guenzi *et al*. (2009). Price convenience was detected through the three items developed by Handelman and Arnold (1999), while the 3-item scale by Guenzi *et al.* (2009) was used for measuring the communication variable. Mobile payment was assessed through three items adapted from Bhattacherjee (2001). Attitude towards COVID-19 pandemic was assessed using the 6-item scale by Ahorsu *et al*. (2020), whereas the five items measuring risk towards offline shopping were adapted from Cox and Cox (2001) and Cox *et al*. (2006). Finally, store preference and repurchase intention were measured, with reference to the COVID-19 pandemic, respectively through the 4-item and 3-item scales adapted from the scale proposed by Bhukya and Singh (2016) and Dutta *et al*. (2011), adapted to the research objective. All items were constructed using a 7-point anchored scale shown in Appendix-Table 1. In addition, demographic questions and grocery retail shopping habit were included.

Analytical procedure

Data underwent two phases of analysis. First, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with the latent variables considered was performed to obtain evidence of convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scales. Second, the paths of the hypothesized relationships were explored through a SEM model with maximum likelihood method employed for the CFA (measurement model) and for the analysis of the conceptual model. Data analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS 25.0 statistical software and the software LISRE 8.80.

Findings

Respondent Profile

The sample was represented by 76% women and 24% men, with a mean age of 37.8 (min = 18; max = 75). Out of the sample, 74.4% live in families from 2 to 4 components; 16% live alone and the remaining 9.5% live in families of 5 or more members. The majority of respondents (55.9%) do their grocery shopping 2 to 5 times a week, 5.2% every day while 38.9% once a week or less.

Analysis of the measurement model

As the skew and kurtosis statistics showed that the normality assumption was violated, the model was estimated using the Satorra-Bentler method (Satorra and Bentler, 1994). The fit statistics indicated that the measurement models fit the data well (χ^2 = 3318.691, df = 629, p = 0.000, CFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.08, NNFI = 0.96, SRMR = 0.08). All items substantially and significantly loaded onto the expected latent construct (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). All constructs also showed satisfactory levels of Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), exceeding the recommended cut-off points for the adequacy of 0.70 and 0.50 respectively (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Steenkamp and Van Trijp 1991). Next, discriminant validity was assessed by the Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion. The average variance explained by each latent variable was greater than any of the squared correlations involving the variable, suggesting that discriminant validity was achieved. Cronbach's alphas were also used to confirm the scales' reliability. All constructs surpassed the recommended

threshold value of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Table 1 in Appendix reports the reliability and validity indexes for each construct.

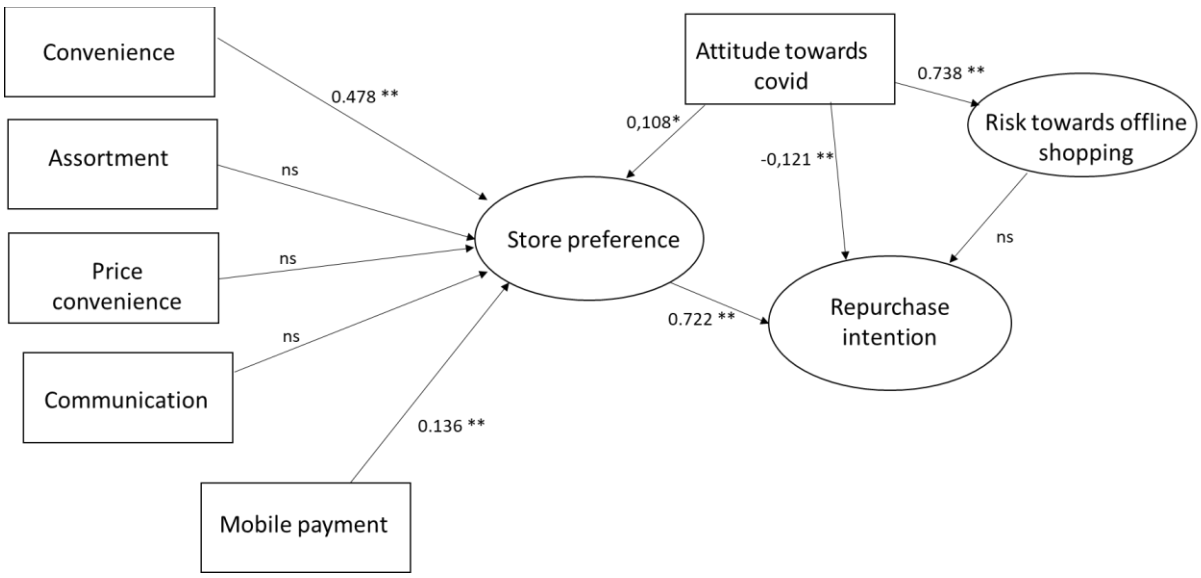
Tests of the structural model

The fit indices indicated an acceptable overall fit of the structural model to the data: Satorra–Bentler scaled $\chi^2 = 3341.649$, df = 631, p = 0.000, CFI = 0.965, RMSEA = 0.082, NFI = 0.958, NNFI = 0.961, SRMR = 0.080.

Discussion of the results

Results showed that convenience and mobile payment significantly affect the store preference, thus supporting H1 and H5: the higher the importance attributed to convenience and mobile payment services the higher the store preference ($\beta_{convenience} = 0.478$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta_{mobile} = 0.478$, $p < 0.01$). On the contrary, H2, H3 and H4 did not found empirical support in the data stating that consumers in period of crisis focus move their attention from classic drivers to factors facilitating their shopping experience. A significant relationship also emerged between store preference and repurchase intention, with the latter increasing as the store preference increases ($\beta = 0.722$, $p < 0.01$). Finally, attitude towards COVID-19 negatively impacted on repurchase intention ($\beta = -0.121$, $p < 0.01$) and simultaneously increased risk toward offline shopping ($\beta = 0.738$, $p < 0.01$), thus supporting H7b and H9. Contrary to what has been hypothesized, concern about COVID-19 did not negatively affect store preference, but increased it ($\beta = 0.108$, $p < 0.05$), while no significant relationship has been found between risk toward offline shopping and repurchase intention. Therefore, H7a and H8 have not been supported.

Figure 2 Structural Model with standardized coefficients



Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; ns: p-value>0.05

Contributions and Implications

The topic of the determinants of the store choice has always been of interest to marketing researchers and managers due to the importance that the store preference has in terms of loyalty.
Although widely covered in the literature, the discontinuity of the current context makes it interesting to deepen this issue in order to understand how the classic store preference drivers are impacted by the health emergency and the online channel. While the e-commerce could be a threat to the survival of the physical store, digital technologies represent a great opportunity to innovate the physical store to satisfy the emerging needs of consumers where the search for 'convenience' appears to be a priority.
It is therefore not surprising that the store preference is strongly influenced by the levers of the commercial service (convenience and mobile payment) that are able to satisfy the need for making shopping quickly and easily.
The search for convenience, which has already been occurring for several years, takes on a higher priority in the current context because of the restrictions imposed to maintain the distancing. Today, more than in the past, consumers need to speed up the shopping process in physical stores. In this context, the levers of shopper marketing should be aimed at satisfying these needs. Consumers are certainly not interested in doing 'in- store browsing' at the physical store, but on the contrary they want to be able to shop quickly and safely. Mobile payment is one of the services that meet this goal, so it is not surprising that it shows a significant and positive relationship on store preference.
It is interesting to note that store preference is not threatened by the attitude towards the COVID-19. On the contrary, the fear of contagion strengthens store preference and reduces the mobility of consumers, who prefer to maintain their relationship with the usual point of sale. This opens up interesting opportunities for retailers who can support their relationship with consumers by leveraging reassurance and offering a convenience shopping experience. A consumer who, in this phase of uncertainty and fear, finds a reassuring context in the usual store, will hardly betray him even when the health emergency is over.
The negative impact on repurchase intention to buy can be interpreted relatively to the tendency of consumers to reduce the frequency of visits and to concentrate purchases to contain the risks of contagion.

To summarize, this work opens a first insight on the most relevant determinants of store preference in the current context of health emergency and explosion of the digital channel. There is no doubt that physical stores must aim to offer a shopping experience based on convenience and technological services that satisfy both the practicality and the security dimension. Finally, the perception of risk in physical contexts opens up interesting considerations on the online channel and on how, the latter, can be integrated by retailers as part of an omnichannel strategy.

Keywords

Shopper behaviour, store preference, Attitude Towards COVID-19 Pandemic, convenience, mobile payment

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Appendix

Table 1. Measurement scales reliability and validity

Scale Items	CR	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Convenience *(Adapted from Saegert et al. 1985)* 1. The store allows for fast payments and checkouts. 2. It is easy to navigate the store. 3. It is easy to park at the store. 4. The interior of the store is pleasant. 5. It is easy to find products in the store. 6. The store is near my house. 7. The store has well-known brands.	0.94	0.70	0.94
Assortment *(Adapted from Homburg et al., 2002 and Guenzi et al., 2009)* 1. The store offers the grocery products I am looking for. 2. In this store the number of different grocery categories is very high. 3. The store has a fair assortment of grocery products. 4. The store has a wide assortment of grocery products.	0.96	0.86	0.96
Price Convenience *(Adapted from Handelman and Arnold, 1999)* 1. A shopper will find the store prices to be, on average, lower than the competition. 2. The store offers its customers very low prices. 3. The store prices are lower than their competitors' prices.	0.94	0.84	0.94
Communication *(Guenzi et al., 2009)* 1. Communication of this store is transparent. 2. Communication of this store is complete. 3. Communication of this store makes me want to buy here.	0.93	0.81	0.92
Mobile Payment *(Adapted from Bhattacherjee, 2001)* 1. The store allows payments via mobile devices (smartphones, tablets). 2. The store allows mobile payment that makes the handling of payments easier. 3. The store allows the use of payment via mobile devices that allow the fast use of mobile apps.	0.95	0.86	0.95

Store Preference *(Adapted from Bhukya and Singh, 2016)* 1. Since the appearance of COVID 19, I like grocery shopping at this store. 2. Since the appearance of COVID 19, grocery shopping at this store gives me pleasure. 3. Since the appearance of COVID 19, among all other retail stores located in this vicinity, I like to shop at this grocery store only. 4. Since the appearance of COVID 19, this grocery store is my preferred choice to shop.	0.91	0.71	0.91
Repurchase Intention *(Adapted from Dutta et al., 2011)* 1. If you need a grocery product in the future, how likely are you to shop at this grocery store? 2. If you ever purchase a grocery product again, how likely are you to buy it from this grocery store? 3. How likely are you to revisit this grocery store for your shopping needs?	0.96	0.90	0.96
Attitude Towards Covid-19 Pandemic *(Ahorsu et al., 2020)* 1. I am most afraid of Covid-19. 2. It makes me uncomfortable to think about Covid-19. 3. My hands become clammy when I think about Covid-19. 4. I am afraid of losing my life because of Covid-19. 5. I cannot sleep because I'm worrying about getting Covid-19. 6. My heart races or palpitates when I think about getting Covid-19.	0.89	0.55	0.88
Risk towards offline shopping *(Adapted from Cox and Cox, 2001 and Cox et al., 2006)* 1. Going shopping is risky. 2. Going shopping can lead to bad results. 3. Going shopping have uncertain outcomes. 4. Going shopping makes me feel anxious. 5. Going shopping would cause me to worry.	0.92	0.65	0.92