

“Shopping With Consumers” As A Research Method – Design And Results Of A Shopping Behavior Study

The method “Shopping with Consumers” (SWC), which consists of interviewing and accompanying the consumer in the retail setting, is examined as process-oriented research approach to assess shopper behavior at the point of purchase (POP), i.e. in the store. Based on field studies, we introduce a standardized SWC-method, a modification of the original method, and present selected results with respect to issues of selectivity (participants versus non-participants) and reactivity of the research procedure. We assess the applicability of SWC to collect data on in-store decisions concerning realization and failure (revising, postponing, dismissal) of purchase plans and the occurrence of unplanned purchases.

Keywords: Shopping with consumers, shopping behavior, point of purchase research, planned purchases, unplanned purchases, selectivity, reactivity

> Prof. Dr. Günter Silberer
University of Göttingen, Germany
gsilber@uni-goettingen.de

> Hsiao-Han Wang
University of Göttingen, Germany
hwang@uni-goettingen.de

Introduction

The dynamic nature of consumer behavior at the point of purchase becomes obvious not only through the numerous purchase decisions that are made or concretized in the store, but also in the various influencing factors. Shopper in-store behavior can be categorized into *observable and non-observable* behavioral elements. Concerning the former it stands to reason to distinguish between the consumer's movement (shopping path) and approach behavior (Sorensen 2003). The shopping path (incl. direction, length, duration) is requisite for contacts with departments, products, POP marketing elements and, therefore, determines the number of contacts (Silberer 2008). Approach behavior comprises of interaction activities, e.g. looking at a product or POP marketing element, examining a product, putting it back, taking it to buy (Wells and Lo Sciuto 1966) or also interactions with sales staff or other customers. This behavior defines the contact quality and intensity.

Besides observable behavior, also decision making processes are of great relevance to marketing practice and research. Unsurprisingly, the development of methods to illuminate shopper behavior at the "scene of action" has been proceeded eagerly (Granbois 1968; Newman and Foxall 2003; Silberer 2005; Sorensen 2003). Research techniques, which only collect data from a static viewpoint, e.g. pre-/post-measurements, do not suffice (Büttner and Silberer 2007). They are of use in registering changes, e.g. of attitude, or in drawing comparisons between the intentions for and outcomes of a store visit (Iyer 1989; Kelly, Smith and Hunt 2000). But they do not trace the actual processes. Methods to track the entire shopping process, i.e. accompanying the consumer while shopping, are required but rarely implemented. In this context the work of Otnes, McGrath and Lowrey (1995) needs to be adduced. Within the scope of various studies (e.g. Otnes and Lowrey 1993; Lowrey, Otnes and Shrum 1998; Lowrey, Otnes and Ruth 2004) they were able to generate extensive data by actually shopping with consumers, using a combination of interviews and observations of the shopping process.

However, when open participatory observation is incorporated, selectivity and reactivity cannot be avoided (Silberer 2009). Since SWC is time and effort consuming for the participants and often includes the request to reveal private aspects, selectivity results from refusal of participation. Reactivity comprises of reactions of the participants to the fact of being observed while shopping. Consequently, the data suffers from decreased external validity.

Deduced from this viewpoint, the contributions of this paper are the following: The original SWC-method is introduced and evaluated. Moreover, a possibility regarding the application is proposed. In this context, selectivity and reactivity issues are assessed by applying a standardized approach, proposed by Silberer (2009 pp. 73-104), as a

modification of the original SWC. Also, suitability for data collection on consumers' daily shopping tasks is tested by means of an empirical study exploring planned and unplanned purchases of store visitors. The purpose pointed out above provides an outline for the remainder of the paper.

"Shopping with consumers" as shopping behavior research

State of the Art

The term "shopping with consumers" (SWC) stems from the work of Otnes, McGrath and Lowrey (1995) and depicts the act of accompanying consumers on repeated shopping trips combined with in-depth interviews as a research methodology. The idea of shopping with consumers is not novel to consumer behavior research. Various studies have been conducted in the direction of tracking behavior via accompanying the consumer (Alexis, Haines and Simon 1968; Titus and Everett 1996). The classification of SWC indicates a variety of alternative compositions of interviewing and observation techniques (Silberer 2008; 2009).¹

With the aim to apprehend consumers' decision making process during a store visit several studies incorporated verbal protocols (Bettman and Zins 1977; Park, Iyer and Smith 1989; Alexis, Haines and Simon 1968). Consumers were asked to think aloud while shopping. This methodology was, e.g., applied to categorize consumer's choice-making heuristics (Bettman and Zins 1977), to analyze effects of situational factors (time pressure, store knowledge) on planned and unplanned purchases (Park, Iyer and Smith 1989) and also to assess decision processes for the case of shopping for women's clothing (Alexis, Haines and Simon 1968). A major advantage of verbal protocols is the connectivity of the generated data to the events and occurrences during the shopping process of interest. Nevertheless, since thinking aloud is said to interfere with the actual shopping task as a result of the utilization of cognitive resources (Russo, Johnson and Stephens 1989), in further studies verbalizing thoughts was done retrospectively, i.e. after the shopping, in order to decrease the risk of altering shopping behavior (see Silberer 2005; Büttner 2009 for video-cued thought protocols).

Concerning the shopping path and approach behavior observational methods - either hidden or open - are most adequate (Iyer 1989, Payne and Ragsdale 1978). Videography can likewise be applied to generate extensive data material (Belk and Kozinets 2005). In

¹ Not regarded are methods which, even though, track consumer behavior, do not incorporate accompanying the consumer while shopping, e.g. via CCTV (Newman and Foxall 2003) or RFID (Larson, Bradlow and Fader 2005; Silberer and Friedemann 2009).

general, recordings bear great potentials not only in assessing the consumer's behavior per se but also situational variables and indicators of the shopping environment (Silberer 2008). Nevertheless, issues regarding the obtrusive nature of video recordings have to be considered. Consents, not only of the participants, but also of other customers and clerks that might appear on the recordings as well, are needed.

“Shopping with Consumers” as a Research Method

Otnes, McGrath and Lowrey clearly contrast SWC to sole interviews and observations. While interviews embody a recollection of experiences, attitudes etc. and observations contain recordings of open behavior, the data which result from SWC are “immediate, informant-driven experiences in retail settings” (Otnes, McGrath and Lowrey 1995). Based on the proximity to the shopper, the opportunity to clarify questions is given constantly. This results in high degree of credibility of the generated data and allows for insights on shopping activities deduced from the actual situation and not from recall (Lowrey, Otnes and McGrath 2005).

Nevertheless, SWC bears critical issues. The fact that the very act of accompanying the consumer has an influence on behavior has to be addressed. The feeling of being judged could emerge, alteration in behavior or justifications of certain behavioral aspects could occur. Compromised external validity of the data is a consequence of reactivity aspects (Silberer 2009). Also, while SWC allows for tracking the entire shopping process, attention should be directed towards the fact that, so far, it has mainly been applied to special shopping events (e.g. wedding or Christmas shopping) and due to the costs and effort only within small samples (Lowrey, Otnes and Ruth 2004; Lowrey, Otnes and Shrum 1998; Otnes, Kim and Lowrey 1992; Payne and Ragsdale 1978). Moreover, characteristic for SWC is the individually designed procedure of the interviews which resemble informal conversations. Methods implementing accompanying the consumer in a standardized manner have rarely been applied in the field.

In order to assess and also diminish selectivity and reactivity effects, a **standardized SWC-procedure** is proposed. It desirably maintains the advantages of accompanying the consumer but facilitates replication, reduces costs and effort on both sides. A single (not repeated) and structured three-stage procedure (pre-shopping interview, structured shopping observation and a post-shopping interview) is proposed (see Silberer 2009 pp. 73-104). The interviews serve as clarifications of the observed behavior, since important variables often cannot be controlled for in the retail setting and effects are often indistinguishable (Wells and Lo Sciuto 1966). Also, standardized interviews and observations would allow for

measuring certain aspects via operationalized variables and established scales. In this manner, SWC ought to be less intrusive which increases acceptance on the part of the consumers, positively affects the representativeness of the sample and the external validity. We aim at developing a technique to collect data on everyday shopping situations with as little alteration of the natural process as possible but still capturing the sequence of activities, incl. the shopping path and approach behavior.

Design of the empirical study in selected stores

Participants and Procedure

The empirical study was conducted in a small town in Germany. Prior to the main study a preliminary survey (pre-survey) was conducted by means of a structured questionnaire. For the pre-survey university students and consumers in a city center area were asked to complete the questionnaire which resulted in a sample of N=542 (female respondents = 58.3%, age: M = 29.39; SD = 12.45). The goal was to assess the feasibility of the SWC-method with respect to the social acceptance (regarding being accompanied by a researcher during a store visit) by potential participants and recruit those for the subsequent main study. Data was collected on the following topics:

- Demographic characteristics
- Degree of willingness to be accompanied once and up to three times (6-point rating scale; 1 = very low to 6 = very high)
- Preferred incentive
- Preferred gender/age of the interviewer/observer
- Reasons for participation/rejection
- Contact details and available times of potential participants.

For the main study two grocery stores of a retail chain (grocery store 1 and 2 for the remainder of the paper) and one electronics retailer were selected. The data collection of the main study was split into two phases. First, data was collected for grocery store 1 (N = 50) and the electronics store (N = 50) as a *comparison between the grocery and electronics sector*. The second wave comprises repeated data collection at grocery store 1 (N = 50) and newly added grocery store 2 (N = 50) as a *comparison between two stores of the same chain*. For the recruitment of participants respondents of the pre-survey were contacted (190 respondents revealed contact details, 169 were chosen and contacted). If they accepted, an appointment was scheduled (*appointment recruitment*). Considering the fact that five months had passed since the pre-survey, a quite positive resonance can be reported: 58 (34.32%) appointments were carried out. Hereafter, and for the second wave of data

collection, participants were recruited in front of the stores (*cold-calling recruitment*). Also, a short documentation (gender, estimated age, perceived time pressure, articulated reason for rejection) of those who rejected was

TABLE 1: Samples of the Main Study

	Phase 1		Phase 2		Grocery Store 1 (total)
	Grocery Store 1	Electronics Store	Grocery Store 1	Grocery Store 2	
N	50	50	50	50	100
Females (%)	72	36	82	72	77
Means of Age (SD)	27.82 (9.76)	26.54 (7.78)	30.3 (11.70)	47.84 (12.94)	29.06 (10.8)
Appointments (%)	86	30	0	0	43

done. Incentives for participation (5€-certificates) were incorporated in the appointment recruitments only. The samples are shown in TABLE 1.

The Pre-Shopping Interview

The interviews were performed using electronic notebooks at a table close to the entrance which was decorated with sweets and beverages for this purpose. The aim of the pre-shopping interview was mainly to assess the following topics:

- Fun/stress associated with shopping (6-point rating scale; 1 = very bad to 6 = very good and 1 = very stressful to 6 = very much fun)
- Time planned for the visit, perceived time pressure (6-point rating scale; 1 = very low to 6 = very high), familiarity with the store (time span since first visit, frequency of visits and store knowledge on a 6-point rating scale; 1 = not at all to 6 = very good)
- Shopping plans (concretization: product, category, brand, type) and certainty of intentions (4-point rating scale; 1 = very certain to 4 = not certain at all)
- Shopping preparation (shopping list or other)
- Planned shopping path (sketched on a floor plan)

Observation of the Shopping Process

Recordings of the observations were made on observation forms which were constructed based on floor plans of the stores, incl. the locations of shelves, product categories (numerically and color-coded) and other areas (checkout counter, recycling center etc.). Moreover, a division of each store into store areas (utilizing letters) was undertaken (see FIGURE 1 as an example for grocery store 1). Within the observational part the researcher's task was to follow unobtrusively while observing and recording consumer's shopping behavior:

- Shopping path (sequence of areas passed)
- Approach activities (utilizing coded symbols): Locations in the store where the consumer pauses to
 - o look at/attend to product/shelf/POP marketing elements
 - o touch/examine a product
 - o take a product to buy
 - o put a product back

o interact with sales staff/other customers/ researcher

- Duration of store visit.

The Post-Shopping Interview

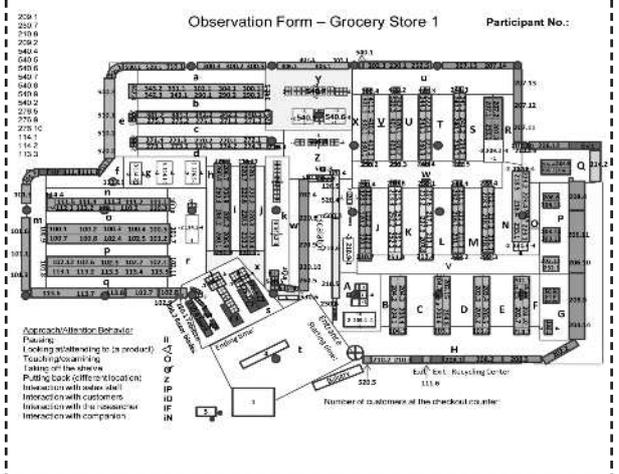
After the store visit the participant was interviewed a second time in order to analyze and clarify aspects of the shopping process:

- Realization or changes (revising, postponing, dismissing of purchase plans) of each recorded planned item with explanations for the buying and non-buying decisions
- Unplanned purchases (items not listed as a planned item and not resulting from changes of those) with explanations for the buying decisions
- Evaluation of store design (with respect to orientation) and of the advertising practices of the retailer (6-point rating scale; 1 = very bad to 6 = very good).

The following topics were assessed for evaluation of the SWC-method:

- Evaluation of the store visit (6-point rating scale; 1 = not at all satisfied to 6 = very satisfied)

FIGURE 1: Observation Form for Grocery Store 1



- Perceived differences regarding the store visit compared to regular visits
- Evaluation of the research method.

Results of the study

Results regarding Selectivity Issues

Out of 542 respondents of the pre-survey 190 (35.06%) stated their interest to participate in a main study. Among those the degree of willingness to be accompanied once averaged at M = 4.52 (SD = 1.07) for

grocery shopping and a rather low M = 2.91 (SD = 1.34) for shopping at an electronics store. The willingness to be accompanied up to three times held an average of M = 3.34 (SD = 1.34).

Evidence which indicates a difference in age between participants and those who rejected (decliners), was found in the sample of the pre-survey (t = 3.950; p < .001; M = 26.80; SD = 10.1 for potential participants and M = 30.8; SD = 13.36 for decliners). This was further supported by the main study (t = -3.488; p < .001) for grocery store 1. Participants were younger (M = 29.06; SD = 10.8) than non-participants (M = 38.75; SD = 17.91), same as in the pre-survey. Contingency analysis concerning the distribution of gender did not detect any significant results.

The respondents of the preliminary study were surveyed about positive and negative aspects associated with participation (TABLE 2). The results comply with Otnes, McGrath and Lowrey (1995) who stated that persons who participate are more likely to be interested in human behavior or shopping (see also Groves, Presser

TABLE 2: Reasons for Acceptance and Rejection of Participation (Pre-Survey)

Reasons for participation ^a	Quota (%) ^a
interested in such type of study	75.2
to support research	61
like to go shopping in company of others	15.8
to learn something about myself	12.6
for the sake of the incentive	11.6
like talking about shopping to others	7.9
like talking about stores to others	5.3
N	190 = 100%
Reasons to reject participation ^b	Quota (%) ^b
would feel obligated if an appointment was scheduled	40.2
do not like to be observed	31.9
scheduling an appointment costs too much time	26.1
would feel disturbed	25.7
do not like to be interviewed	17.9
would refrain from buying certain products in company of the researcher	13.3
do not want to reveal shopping behavior	7.6
would be incited to buy certain things in company of the researcher	6.5
N	542 = 100%

^a 100 % correspond to the 190 respondents who would participate in further studies; ^b multiple answers possible; ^c 75% of 190 would participate because they are interested in such type of study; ^d 100% correspond to the entire sample of 524 of the pre-survey; ^e 40.2% of 542 would reject participation because they would feel obligated to participate if an appointment was scheduled

and Dipko 2004). Positive correlation between the degree of fun associated with shopping and the feeling associated with the study was only obtained for the sample of grocery store 1 (r_{xy} = .202; p < .05).

Results regarding Reactivity Issues

In previous SWC-studies the compatibility between the researcher and participants was addressed with regards to the differences between genders (Lowrey, Otnes and McGrath 2005). Female shoppers tend to bring a friend when accompanied by a male researcher and, moreover, this combination was perceived to be less open (Otnes, McGrath and Lowrey 1995), leading to the assumption that one source of reactivity is the researcher him-/herself (Spano 2006). Similarly, Alexis, Haines and Simon (1968) found a female interviewer to be more appropriate to accompany participants. The pre-survey sample revealed, though not significant, the same preference: 15.3% preferred a female, only 0.5% a male

researcher, 84.1% were indifferent. Surprisingly, compatibility with respect to age is highly significant (F (2, 107) = 15.886; p < .001).

As to the perceived differences by the participants in own behavior due to the researcher's presence, quite positive results were obtained (TABLE 3). Furthermore, consisting of a quite equal distribution of participants with and without appointments, the total sample of grocery store 1 was drawn on to investigate possible effects resulting from the manner of recruitment. Contingency

TABLE 3: Perceived Differences in own Behavior^a

	Grocery Store 1	Grocery Store 2	Electronics Store
No difference	39.0% ^{b,c}	76.0% ^c	32.0% ^d
Felt observed	39.0%	14.0%	48.0%
Shopped more deliberately	11.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Shopped faster than usual	9.0%	7.0%	8.0%
N	100 = 100%	50 = 100%	50 = 100%

^a Multiple answers possible; ^b 100% correspond to N = 100 of grocery store 1; ^c 100% correspond to N = 50 of grocery store 2; ^d 100% correspond to N = 50 of the electronics store; ^e 39.0% of 100 perceived no difference in own behavior

analyses yielded significant correlations: more participants with an appointment perceived differences (X² = 32.518; p < .001) and more of them felt observed (X² = 8.965; p < .05).

As presented in TABLE 4, quite positive results were obtained for the evaluation of the study and the researcher as well. When tested for effects stemming from the manner of recruitment, significant results were yielded for each listed answer. The evaluation of the study (M = 4.98; SD = .641) and the researcher (M = 5.23; SD = .824) by those who were recruited by cold-calling resulted in significantly lower means (evaluation of study: t = 2.643; p < .01 and of researcher t = 3.693; p < .001) than of participants recruited from the pre-survey (M = 5.33; SD = .644 respective to the study and M = 5.72; SD = .504 to the researcher). Furthermore, a significant difference (t = 5.444; p < .001) in the average number of purchase plans (with appointments: M = 6.98; SD = 4.056;

TABLE 4: Evaluation of the Study and the Researcher

	Grocery Store 1	Electronics Store	Grocery Store 2
Feeling associated with participation ^a	M = 5.13 (.661) ^b	M = 5.18 (.596)	M = 5.12 (.961)
Evaluation of the researcher as shopping observer ^a	M = 5.44 (.743)	M = 5.76 (.431)	M = 5.10 (.886)
N	100 = 100%	50 = 100%	50 = 100%

^a 6-point rating scale; 1 = very negative to 6 = very positive; ^b standard deviations in parentheses

without appointments: M = 3.04; SD = 2.841) was shown and also more participants with an appointment prepared a shopping list (X² = 8.452; p < .001), which indicates that this group was more prepared.

Results regarding Planned and Unplanned Purchases

Purchase plans of the store visitors incl. the certainty of the intention and the degree of concreteness as to the definition of the planned items (category, brand, type) was recorded in the pre-shopping interview. For the total of 467 planned items for grocery store 1 the category was

named for 60.25%, 15.01% were concretized regarding the brand and for 25.37% even the type was defined. In 82.88% of the cases the plan was rated as very certain. The electronics store sample showed quite the opposite: Only 39 purchase plans were listed. Almost half of the sample (46%) came without any plans, another 42% listed only one item (64.1% were very certain, 25.64% rather certain). The remaining percentage had two to five planned items in mind. The category was named in more than half, the brand in 17.94% and the type in 28.21% of the cases. For the 187 planned items of grocery store 2 again almost half (47.06%) were named with categories, 18.18% with brands and 33.16% were concretized down to the type. Again a very high proportion of 86.1% of the plans were rated as very certain.

The results concerning the realization of the purchase plans, the purchase plan failures (revising, postponing, dismissing) as well as unplanned purchases are summarized in TABLE 5 and 6. Remarkably high proportions of purchase plans were fulfilled for both grocery stores as opposed to the electronics store. The quota of not fulfilled or revised plans was similar for both grocery stores, for the electronics store it amounted to almost 50%. Revised plans constitute the highest proportion in the electronics store sample. Due to the type of goods offered, changed intentions and postponed purchases are typical. On the other side, availability plays a major role for grocery store shoppers (Kelly, Smith and Hunt 2000).

Results supporting the assumption that store knowledge contributes to the fulfillment of shopping plans (Iyer and Ahlawat 1987) are the following: the number of purchases which were realized as planned is positively correlated with the store knowledge ($r_{xy} = .20$; $p < .05$) for grocery store 1 and also significantly correlated with the time span since the first store visit ($r_{xy} = .442$;

TABLE 6: Unplanned Purchases

	Grocery Store 1	Grocery Store 2	Electronics Store
Number of unplanned purchases	177 = 100%	85 = 100%	11 = 100%
M (SD) per shopper	1.77 (1.734)	1.7 (2.073)	.22 (.55)
Type of Purchase (%) ^a			
Reminded in the store	27.68 ^a	44.71 ^b	36.37 ^c
Bought after deliberate consideration	13.56 ^d	14.12	54.55
Bought quickly without any consideration	40.11	34.11	27.28
Having a habit of buying this product	20.90	14.11	0
Reason for Purchase (%) ^e			
Offer on a shelf	7.35 ^f	4.71	0
Special presentation	11.86	23.53	36.37
Special product attributes	19.21	30.59	9.1
Curiosity/try something new	15.82	8.24	18.19

^a 100% correspond to 177 unplanned items of grocery store 1; ^b 100% correspond to 85 unplanned items of grocery store 2; ^c 100% correspond to the 11 unplanned items of the electronics store; ^d 13.56% of the 177 unplanned items were bought after deliberate consideration; ^e multiple answers possible

Considering the number of unplanned purchases, significant correlations with the time spent in the store existed for both grocery stores (1: $r_{xy} = .418$; $p < .001$; 2: $r_{xy} = .389$; $p < .05$), this does not hold for electronics shoppers though. In general, the duration of the store visits remained relatively short and averaged at M = 9.0 minutes (SD = 5.035) for grocery store 1, M = 7.62 (SD = 5.624) as to grocery store 2 and the electronics shoppers on average spent M = 10.98 (SD = 7.891) minutes in the store.

Taking the consumer's shopping path into account, significant positive correlations were obtained between the number of unplanned purchases and store areas passed by the shopper. Again, this only holds for the grocery stores (1 : $r_{xy} = .523$; $p < .01$; 2: $r_{xy} = .389$, $p < .05$), letting one assume that the more areas a consumer passes the higher the chance to encounter products for unplanned purchases. Furthermore, for the grocery stores positive correlations exist between the number of planned items and of store areas passed (1: $r_{xy} = .629$, $p < 0.001$; 2: $r_{xy} = .631$, $p < .001$), as this number is also significantly correlated to the number of fulfilled purchase plans (1: $r_{xy} = .592$, $p < .001$; 2: $r_{xy} = .607$, $p < .001$). Moreover, the occurrence of approach behavior is positively correlated with the purchases (1: $r_{xy} = .896$; $p < .001$; 2: $r_{xy} = .897$; $p < .001$).

Discussion and limitations

With focus on methodical issues, we examined the SWC-method as a shopper behavior research technique and were able to gain first insights especially regarding selectivity and reactivity issues. The lack of significant differences in the demographic structure, besides age, between the participants and those who rejected lets us assume our standardized SWC-procedure not to be as time and effort consuming as that this would have affected participation significantly. The remaining selectivity is a consequence of general circumstances of studies in which voluntary participation is required.

When considering reactivity effects, as to the compatibility between consumers and the researcher, supported by our data, we understand this not to be of essential relevance. Nevertheless, with regard to the

TABLE 5: Realization of Purchase Plans

	Grocery Store 1	Grocery Store 2	Electronics Store
Number of purchase plans (products)	473 = 100%	187 = 100%	39 = 100%
M (SD) per shopper	4.73 (3.923)	3.74 (3.475)	0.78 (1.04)
Realized as planned (%)	62.58 ^a	79.14 ^a	33.33 ^b
Concretized in the store (%)	20.51 ^d	9.09	25.64
Not fulfilled/revised (%)	16.49	10.70	43.59
Not fulfilled/revised plans	78	20	17
Changed intention (%)	37.18 ^c	15	47.06
Dismissed (%)	34.62	65	17.65
Postponed (%)	15.38	5	35.29
Neglected (%)	8.97	1	0
Changed intentions	29	3	8
Not found (%)	6.90 ^f		
Not available (%)	27.59		
Too expensive (%)	6.90		
Dismissed or postponed plans	39	14	9
Not found (%)	12.82 ^g	0	
Not available (%)	35.90	42.86	
Too expensive (%)	28.21	0	
Prepared shopping list (%)	27	36	0
Had shopping path planned (%)	79	82	86

^a 100% correspond to 473 planned items of grocery store 1; ^b 100% correspond to 187 planned items of grocery store 2; ^c 100% correspond to 39 planned items of the electronics store; ^d 20.51% of 473 plans were concretized in the store; ^e out of 78 not fulfilled/revised plans in 37.18% of the cases the intention was changed; ^f for 6.9% of 29 plans the intention was changed because the product was not found; ^g 12.82% out of 39 the plan was dismissed or postponed because the product was not found

$p < .001$) for grocery store 2, which makes contextual sense. Significant negative correlation was detected between the number of not fulfilled/revised plans and the frequency of store visits ($r_{xy} = -.557$; $p < .05$).

effectiveness of the method to explore purchase intentions and outcomes one aspect has to be addressed: Having the participant list planned items or explain the planned shopping path yields valuable insights but also makes the consumer attentive to his/her own behavior (Silberer 2009). Also, the recruitment of participants via appointment prepares the consumer, which also alters shopping behavior. The question arises whether, due to those factors, the planned items and the certainty of the plans may be overstated in the data while unplanned purchases might be understated.

As far as further analysis is concerned, sequence analysis on the basis of the sequences of in-store activities (passed store areas and approach activities) is recommended. This allows for the detection of relations in the shopping paths and approach activities. Moreover, customer segmentation based on the shopping paths is possible (Silberer, Steinmann and Mau 2007).

Limitations of the study first concern the type of stores or branches, respectively, which were selected for the study. Compared to grocery shoppers, electronics shoppers had fewer purchase plans and realized fewer unplanned purchases. This is not an odd occurrence, since electronics stores are often visited for browsing or entertainment. It is still to be assessed whether or not the SWC-method has an effect in this matter. Another aspect regards the mix of interviewing and observation techniques. Clearly, since the combination was not varied throughout the study, an evaluation can only be regarded on an absolute basis. Future research should consider different combinations, e.g. incorporating video recordings or repeated store visits, to allow for a comparative evaluation of methods regarding selectivity and reactivity. Nevertheless, similar results to other studies concerning certain aspects of in-store behavior can be an indication for the adequacy of the method. All in all, the evaluation of the method by the participants was assessed. But direct effects stemming from the method were not measured.

Towards a further application of "shopping with consumers"

By testing the applicability of a standardized procedure to everyday shopping tasks we assess the feasibility of SWC and attempt to generate larger samples to increase the inferential value of the generated data. Recommendations regarding further application of SWC are stated in the following:

The recruitment of the participants constitutes an essential part. While both manners of recruitment (appointment/cold-calling) worked well, it should be clear that appointments are more of an intervention into the natural shopping situation. On the other hand, while cold-calling recruitment ensures data collection on only those

store visitors who genuinely intended to go shopping, rejection of participation might cause greater selectivity issues. So it is recommended to consider a sample consisting of both types of recruitments to counterbalance the advantages and disadvantages.

SWC can be of value for the practical application providing information for the managerial marketing practice. One possible application concerns accompanying the shopper repeatedly on several store visits in order to track buying behavior over the course of time. But not only longitudinal studies on an individual shopper-related basis but also replications as a whole including different samples at certain time intervals (e.g. once a year) is of great relevance in order to detect changes in behavior.

A last recommendation concerns the above mentioned limitation of the selected retail branches. Effects concerning different retail types or branches should be considered for future analysis. A comparison allows for the assessment of effects stemming from, e.g., different types of consumer goods. Further possible issues to explore could be the effectiveness of POP marketing elements, e.g. special presentations or sales offers (Granbois 1968, Kelly, Smith and Hunt 2000). Also store design and layout could be of interest (Granbois 1968). With regard to the consumers' intentions for and outcomes of the store visit, if the deployment of POP marketing elements can be directed towards the increasing of unplanned purchases and minimization of purchase plan failures a contribution to the success of the store is made (Iyer and Ahlawat 1987).

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