The Showrooming Effect in Retail

An empirical study on the athletic footwear market

By

Andreea C. Georgescu

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Abstract

The dissertation thesis analyzes a topic of great interest for the retail industry, which recently raised debates among retailers and researchers. Retail showrooming is a new trend where consumers exhibit their shopping behavior across the online and the offline channels by switching retail channels at different stages of their shopping journey. With reference to a limited academic literature, the concept of showrooming in retail is outlined through the changes that happen in the retail industry at the moment, by emphasizing the drivers and the implications of this trend. Using as a guideline the simple decision making process model, the dissertation plans to open the discussion about retail showrooming for academics.

The research study is conducted on the athletic footwear market on a sample of students in order to learn more about their shopping behavior across retail channels. The study focus is to identify showrooming within the athletic footwear industry. Then, the application of the decision making model aims to find the influential aspects of cross-channel buying behavior and the level of influence for switching channels from online to offline and vice versa. But, debates rise across the significance of the brick-and-mortar stores and the future impact of the online channel over shoppers. Therefore, the implications of showrooming on customer loyalty are discussed by presenting the drivers that compel shoppers to return to the same retailer for a new purchase.

This dissertation thesis will contribute to the limited academic research on retail showrooming, by encouraging further research of the shopping phenomenon that seems to be changing the nature of shopping in a profound way.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Consumers’ shopping habits have changed with the introduction of new technologies such as the internet. They are empowered to use information and data to their advantage and make decisions about their purchases and their preferences at a faster pace. On the other hand, the retail industry has also changed from a simple business model, where a single channel predominated, to a multi-channel customer centric model. Thus, consumers can interact with retailers across channels anytime, anywhere and at their convenience. Due to a diversity of products and brands, shoppers hardly make an instant purchase decision. They would rather search and evaluate products either online or in-store. Moreover, these shoppers are influenced by price, so they are inclined to make comparisons for products and price. This behavior turns consumers into savvy shoppers by seeking the best deal to satisfy their needs. Therefore, a new challenging retail trend threatens retailers with lower profits, close-down businesses and less loyal customers.

Retail showrooming is the most discussed retail phenomenon, which is debated by mass-media. Showrooming refers to consumer behavior of searching and evaluating a product of interest in-store and, then, purchasing it online or vice versa. Academic research has not covered this phenomenon in great detail yet, but the concept of showrooming is synthetized as research shopping within a cross-channel retail activity.

Analogue to the concept of showrooming, academic literature refers to a cross-channel shopping behavior where consumers switch retail channels during the shopping journey for convenient shopping. To this extent, commercial reports indicate that shoppers use the technological devices (mobile phone, tablets and laptops) during the search and the purchase stages. Furthermore, another concern for retailers is the level of loyalty expressed by their customers. Showrooming is actually leading to less loyalty to retailers due to the high frequency of switching retail channels.

The dissertation thesis proposes to analyze the problem of showrooming raised within the retail industry. The paper uses the framework of a traditional business research which introduces a contemporary problem and the changes that have occurred within the retail industry with reference to the sport footwear market. The second chapter defines showrooming in terms of academic literature by presenting the factors of influence of the trend and the implications to retail industry in general. Evidence is strengthened by data given by commercial report studies which warn retailers across the sport footwear market about the negative implications of showrooming. After identifying the issues of concern, and the gap that academic research misses within this context, the third chapter outlines the
research framework. Mixed research methods are implemented to determine three objectives. One purpose is to identify consumers who engage in showrooming when they purchase sport footwear. Secondly, by defining the influential aspects of cross-channel buying behavior during the consumer shopping journey, the investigation will present the level of influence for switching from online to offline channels and vice versa. Lastly, the aspect of retail loyalty plans to identify whether showrooming on sport footwear has an effect on customer loyalty to physical retail stores.

The research study is conducted on a sample of students from the University of Edinburgh. Their behavior is exemplified within a critical analysis upon the research findings during the fourth chapter. Finally, in chapter five, the conclusions attest the findings with reference to research questions. Implications of the study related to the contribution it has for academic research are presented, as well as further suggestions for study.
Chapter 2: Theoretical underpinnings

This chapter presents the concept of retail showrooming that commercial studies report with reference to a limited academic research. Evidence of showrooming is presented by the factors of influence of the trend and the implications to retail industry in general. An overview of the athletic footwear market is presented in order to outline the importance of learning about this trend in retail during the research.

2.1. Variation in the Retail Environment

Shopping used to be a type of “leisure” (Yu Davis et al., 2012) and “entertainment” (Schwartz, 2011, p. 6) activity where consumers would try things on and spend their time at a shopping mall. Today, shopping is about “precision” (Yu Davis and Dyer, 2012). Consumers want to get what they want quickly and efficiently. Likewise, consumers have too many choices, which prompt them to look for alternatives during their purchasing decision. Consequently, shoppers evaluate these alternatives as “missed opportunity” instead of an “opportunity’s potential” (Schwartz, 2011, p. 120).

More than 50% of consumers are shopping in “competitive aisles” (Schwartz, 2012, p.91) and within a multi-channel environment. Here, the quest for low prices is highly recognized by shoppers due to the time and the effort they spend to acquire valuable items (Yu Davis et al., 2012). From here on, the multi-channel dimension has posed a series of challenges for retailers since the emergence of e-commerce beginning in 1999 (Tang et al., 2001). Since then, online shopping offers instant and wide access to a multitude of products and lower prices on average than any conventional store. This fact determined brick-and-mortar stores to start selling online, which deliberately made e-commerce more competitive. Therefore, the concern that the online channel would become leader within a multi-channel retail environment due to low price offerings was highly foreseen, at that time, as a destructive way and a subject of conflict between online and offline retailers (Tang et al, 2001, Lempert, 2002). This situation has progressively taken a toll on traditional brick & mortar retailers.

Today, shoppers are influenced to negotiate over their purchasing decision. Moreover, they place brick-and-mortar stores at danger by favoring e-commerce platforms. A reason for this is that price and product information are easily compared through online channels, while searching in-store means spending more time by going to different places. Moreover, online
transactions save time. But, the offline channel offers the greatest opportunity to get that expert advice when shoppers find difficulties in making a purchase decision. In addition, consumers can feel, touch and try the product (Kollman et al. 2012). Lempert, the author of “Being the shopper” (2002), considers that the lack of sensorial stimuli makes online shopping “rather boring” (p.60), which stops the consumer to proceed to an impulse purchase.

However, a multi-channel presence within the retail environment creates a new trend in shopping, where price sensitive consumers, also called “special shoppers” (Moschis (1976) cited in Lee et al., 2008, p.195) look for the best deal online while visiting physical stores. They embrace mobile technologies, to look for product information, price and convenient return policies. In this way, more shoppers turn brick-and-mortar stores into showrooms, which present a real challenge for retail businesses.

2.2. Evidence of Retail Showrooming: review of commercial consumer reports and academic research

Academic research started to pay more attention to the multi-channel consumer behavior during shopping. The factors that influence single channel to a multiple channel purchase is discussed by Schoenbachler et al. (2002). The authors look into drivers of influence of purchasing decision such as price of the product, the perception of security of information and the guarantees a retailer offers to its customers. Consumers feel there is a certain level of risk when they purchase from either online or offline retailers. But, this can be overcome by the familiarity they hold with that retailer and the past purchases they had on that particular channel. Nevertheless, the multitude of alternatives that retailers offer, lead consumers to the so-called behavior of “showrooming”, as it is classified by commercial consumer reports and mass-media. This type of behavior was confirmed by Group M research agency in a consumer study (Monteleone et al., 2013) showing that shoppers are motivated by a discounted price between 5% up to 15% off to leave the store for another retailer. Therefore, they are determined to purchase the item from a competitor store or online retailer that will offer such incentive. The study conducted on Canadian shoppers showed that Canadians, compared to American shoppers, are less price sensitive, but factors like shipping time and familiarity with the retailer are factors that influence their purchase decision (Monteleone et al., 2013).
“Showrooming” is a term used to classify shoppers’ behavior of “browsing on their mobile phone for items at brick-and-mortar retailers only to buy online at a lower price” (Placed, 2013). As much as the concept is not profoundly analyzed among academia, academic literature calls it “research shopper phenomenon” (Verhoef et al., 2007) where consumers look for a product in one channel, then they subsequently purchase it at another channel. The concept has turned into a retail trend that most retailers have only recently begun to address. When the research agency Placed conducted the study (2013) on retail showrooming using a sample of American consumers, it was noticed that stores such as Walmart, Best Buy and Target were threatened by the high market share that Amazon started to gain. Consequently, retailers responded with a new price-matching policy (Schuman, 2013) that seemed to make them less vulnerable in front of the online retailer. Consequently, this strategy puts pressure on profit margins and square footage growth (Mehra et al. 2012).

A recent research report conducted by Harris Interactive (2013) confirms that consumers still showroom in U.S. stores and they end up purchasing online on Amazon or eBay (Appendix 1). Commercial consumer reports on retail showrooming touched on different aspects such as the most used channel or retailers online and offline, the amount of money spent online and the impact of price matching on consumers’ purchasing decision. Additionally research agencies showed interest to understand how consumers adopt multi-channel retail. They looked into the advantages and disadvantages of online and offline channels and the category of products mostly showroomed (Vibes 2012, Placed 2013, Harris Interactive 2013, Foolproof 2013, Kantar Retail 2013).

In this realm, the smartphone plays an important role that determines a new consumer behavior. Consumers are multi-tasking on their mobile device to search, to use applications, to socialize on different networks with their friends. Moreover, the smartphone has become a shopping tool that influences buyer decisions and purchases across channels (Google 2012, ComScore 2013). Academics argue for the use of mobile devices during shopping because it allows consumers to shop when they are on the move, therefore it is a substitute for convenience (Yang et al., 2012, Chatterjee, 2010).

From the utilitarian point of view, a mobile phone used during the shopping journey will save time for product information search while consumers travel to the shopping destination (Yang et al., 2012). According to a study conducted by the consumer research agency Vibes (2012), on how consumers use mobile devices for their purchases, 33% of respondents used their mobile phone to compare one retailer to another. Then, information search and reviews on a product are highly used on a smartphone. Also, to make purchases as stated in
a study by Google, 62% of buyers made purchases on their mobile device at least once a month (Google, 2012, p.31). Thus, when referring to retail showrooming, the smartphone is a good companion in all stages of the purchase funnel (Solomon et al., 2010).

On the hedonic side, the mobile phone creates a new experience for shoppers through different applications. Moreover, it is used for social purposes, where shoppers share their location or a shopping status on social networking sites like Facebook. Arnold et al. (2003) refer to the value of shopping given by a bargain or a deal. Hence, marketers explore new ways to reach consumers on their mobile phones through geo-location advertising strategies, where notifications about sales or promotions are pushed to mobile consumers according to their proximity to retailer.

Insight Express analytics conducted a study in 2010 on retail showrooming that resulted as a popular trend in US, where 40% of shoppers surveyed used the mobile device to find a better price when shopping in a physical store, while in 2011 up to 59% of smartphone users declared this behavior (Knowledge Wharton, 2012). Likewise, UK shoppers are taken away by this trend too due to the increase of smartphone usage for consumers between 25 and 34 years old, who use their mobile device to find store location, to compare product prices and to research product features as seen in the research report by comScore (2013).

In 2012, Foolproof conducted a study during Christmas time on UK consumers and how they compare prices on their smartphone device. At that time retail showrooming was more pronounced among 24% of UK shoppers between 18-39 years old. Results showed that consumers visited stores to check products that they were planning to buy online. The impact of showrooming over the UK High Street during Christmas period in 2012 concerned retailers as more than “half a billion pounds of business walked out of the door to a competitor” (Foolproof, 2013).

Retail showrooming continues to exist for different product categories such as: clothes, electronic goods, furniture and exercise equipment (Cummins, 2013). When consumers are engaged in showrooming, they are looking for accurate and accessible information or a good deal. They are also looking to feel better about their purchase or to find a customized shopping experience (Vibes, 2012). However, consumer research reports have indicated that shoppers are not only looking for just a low price. During the purchase decision and the channel choice consumers seek fast and reliable delivery of purchases, a good return policy, exclusive or early access to products (Utter, 2013). Therefore, consumers place Amazon on their top list of favorite online retailers (Kantar Retail, 2013). Prime members of Amazon benefit from cheaper and faster shipping than other retailers through 1-Click button, along with a various product assortments and fulfillment centers, which determine shoppers to
favor more online shopping. Additionally, consumers become loyal to Amazon because the online retailer acknowledges the customer and it builds a relationship by sending e-mail notification of new releases, by reminding shoppers of old recommendations and by thanking them for the order and how important their business is to them (Lempert, 2002).

The reason why retailers are in a crisis today is because of the advent of the Internet and as a result e-commerce growth that has transformed the way consumers shop (Grewal et al. 2009). Not to mention the softening consumer demand created by the recent global recession. Also, retailer operating costs are higher, but consumer household spending still remains low. It is forecasted that brick-and-mortar stores are destined to shrink in favor of the powerful online retailers (Bamfield, 2013). But the effects of this transition is linked to consumer behavior during the decision making process.

2.3. The Retail Showrooming Effect

2.3.1. Factors of Influence for Retail Showroming

Changes in shopper behavior are influenced by socio-economic and technological factors. It is assumed that the needs of shoppers remain the same, but transitions create greater expectations (Kantar Retail, 2013). Hence, the Internet creates a unique opportunity to reach consumers in a cost-effective way (Lempert, 2002). In this way consumers have more alternative devices to shop: they may start search on a PC, tablet or smartphone. They may end the purchase in a store or use their tablet and with one click they complete a transaction. E-commerce is a concept widely proliferated that changes the behavior of shoppers. Consequently, the simple decision model (AIDA) turns into a complex purchase decision model that leads to difficulties in management for retailers and brand owners to reach their customers and to convince them to buy (Underhill, 2000, p.32).

Recession is one cause of stores closures. According to The Centre of Retail Research, the number of retail space close downs has risen from 5,4% in 2008 to 14,2% in 2012 (Bamfield, 2013). As much as a store closure is acceptable in retail activity life cycle, this is driven by competition, high operational costs, innovation or poor marketing strategy.

Another factor is the fast pace transformation of the retail environment (Bamfield, 2013). Here, the change in consumer habits is significant. There is a change in the frequency of shopping, price perception and the adoption of new technology that leads to damaging effects for retailers, such as low profitability. As for retail showrooming, retailers regard it as
another negative factor. First, it has a damaging impact on employment by forcing physical stores to go out of business. For example, Best Buy in U.S. closed stores, as well as big retailers in UK, like Jessop, HMV and Comet (Campbell, 2013, Kristin, 2013). Moreover, Borders in US closed down its doors because it could not compete against Amazon (Mehra et al. 2012).

2.3.2. **Showrooming: the specter of a retail trend**

Showrooming has effects on the pricing incentives of the offline and the online store (Mehra et al. 2012). Retailers’ efforts to regain their customers by offering lower and discounted prices enabled online retailers, like Amazon, to look into this opportunity and to offer products at cheaper prices. Thus, this aspect led to the intensification of competition and loss of profits. Additionally, the multi-channel environment influences customers to change retail channels during the shopping process (Nunes and Cespedes, 2003). As a result, during their quest for lower prices and convenience, shoppers tend to be less loyal to a certain retailer.

Loyalty programs aim to retain customers, to win greater share of wallet, to persuade shoppers to make additional purchases and to regain higher profits. Loyalty is controlled by rewards, implicit by either hedonic or utilitarian nature of rewards, the expansion of relationship by encouraging customers to purchase more products and the flexibility of using reward points into a cash purchase (Solomon et al., 2010). But customers’ shopping habits migrate between online and offline space. For this reason customer retail loyalty is in decline due to factors, such as the economic situation that drives consumers to evaluate their purchase decisions by price comparison.

Retailers rush to adapt to the newest technologies, such as mobile devices. So, showrooming opens the gate for the omni-channel incursion in retail (Aubrey et al. 2012) where a retailer integrates all channels in a unique physical environment that will encourage showrooming by directing the shopper from their website to their store (Verhoef et al. 2007, p. 144). Online retail growth encourages the use of mobile devices in retail environments and allows customers to easily get access through mobile applications or QR codes in a multi-channel environment. This is a solution to provide consumers more information about products and reviews, to lure customers with incentives and new applications such as mobile location advertising. This aspect is being increasingly encountered today in stores like Nordstrom where customers benefit from in-store technologies like web kiosks. With web
Kiosks, consumers browse for products in order to locate them, to find out price information and then purchase in-store. Research assumes that shoppers will spend more money at a physical store unless it delivers an outstanding experience by integrating the offline and online touch points (Capgemini, 2012). For example, Walmart launched a mobile app that recognizes when customers are in the store, which it will then them to shop more effectively in the physical store. Ikea launched an interactive online catalogue that allows customers to make decisions at home before getting to their store (Nelson, 2012). Therefore, retailers look for practical ideas to keep the functionality of physical stores open while adapting to online transition.

On the positive side, research shopping is beneficial from an economic point of view. Consumers are better informed in this way when they search for price information. Then, consumers have a higher self-image for the better shopping choice they made and the deal they got (Verhoef et al. 2007). Once the purchase is completed, shoppers will feel an emotional connection and more engaged with the retailer (Fleming, 2013). It is thought that retailers lack in understanding their customers’ behavior in order to offer a compelling and differentiated promise of their services to customers; instead they look fearfully at showrooming as the next unfriendly behavior that destroys their business (Fleming 2013, Webster 2013).

Academic research has not yet profoundly analyzed the consumer behavior engaged in showrooming and the effect it has on different shopping stages within a multi-channel retail environment. There are just theories and assumptions that identify a change in behavior across channels during shopping enforced by new technology and a multi-channel environment. Not too long ago, Verhoef et al. (2007) identified the concept of “research shopper” and the drivers that influence consumers to express this type of behavior. Deeper research is needed to understand the research shopper behavior during the multi-channel shopping decision making process and how consumers shop when they keep one eye at their smartphone screen and another eye at the rack of merchandise in a store aisle.
2.4. The Research Shopper in a Multichannel Environment

2.4.1. Who is Showrooming?

Each shopper is unique and behaves differently as a consumer. During the customer journey, there are shoppers who will perform extensive research until they find the best price or the right attribute that will fulfill their needs. In this context the rational consumer’s buying decision happens in a market where prices vary in range and the consumers’ search effort is greater (Lempert, 2002). But, recent changes in the retail environment force consumers to be less conscious within their decision making process for the myriad of alternatives that retailers offer in a multi-channel environment (Horton 1984, Solomon et al. 2010).

Few academic researchers have shown interest in analyzing the research shopper, who engages in a cross-channel free-riding behavior, by using the online channel at the beginning of their informational search and then visiting the offline retailer for more search or purchase (Chiu et al., 2011, Noble et al.2005, Kollman et al. 2012). It is the type of “uninvolved shopper” (Konus et al. 2008, p. 408), a price conscious mindset, whose focus is to obtain good value through price comparison (Balasubramanian et al.2005). While showrooming, the research shopper looks at alternative channels for information search and shows low shopping involvement (Konus et al. 2008).

According to Solomon et al. (2010) such shoppers could be integrated in the category of “moderately knowledgeable” (p. 328) who knows little about the products and the attributes it looks for. Therefore, they search more and limit their visits to physical stores. In contrast, research has shown that there is no variation and no attachment for the channel choice for consumers who alternate channels during the search and purchase phases (Konus et al. 2008). Therefore, shoppers engaged in showrooming are not considered as loyal as the single-channel shoppers (Noble et al.2005). Neslin et al. (2006) suggest that extensive research is the reason, but Solomon et al. (2010) believe that switching retail channels from online to offline is the result of variety seeking, that occurs when there is little stimulation with the environment or, even, unfamiliarity, with the channel. Thus, research should look into the consumer journey and the research shopper’s buying decision process in order to understand how consumers show loyalty towards physical stores when they engage in showrooming. This will address the assumptions made in the media that physical stores are prompt to close in the near future (Centre for Retail Research, 2013, Chahal 2013, McIntyre et al. 2013).
2.4.2. The Research Shopper Journey

2.4.2.1. The Showrooming Decision Funnel

The customer journey analysis has turned into an organized examination on consumers’ interfaces with retailers across all channels (Schijns et al. 2012). The primary challenge is that consumers are more informed than ever. The consumer decision funnel was very simple, but it’s turning out not to be linear anymore because consumers have more choices and access to information. A purchase decision is made in a split second, almost automatically. But in many cases shoppers pass through a long journey to reach a smart decision. The free way to so many choices breaks the moment of impulsive buying decision to a point where consumers are weary of searching for the best price or the most convenient way to fulfill a need (Solomon et al. 2010).

A traditional approach on shopping decision making process is the “rational perspective” (Solomon et al. 2010, p. 315), where consumers organize their information and the possible alternatives based on the utilitarian value of their need. At the basis of the buying decision behavior stand variables such as the cost of a product, the frequency of purchasing, the consumer’s level of involvement, the familiarity with the retailer or the product and the type of search (limited or extensive) given to the purchase (Solomon et al. 2010). These factors are encountered even in showrooming, where they interfere during the search and the purchase stages in the multichannel environment (Verhoef et al. 2007).

Theoretically, the decision making process passes through an organized and linear process (Figure 1), but, new touch points lead to a circular model where consumers pass through initial consideration, evaluation or the search stage for a potential acquisition on different channels, purchase and post-purchase (Figure 2) (Court et al. 2009). But such models are easily adapted and transformed into abstract models.
Figure 1: Consumer decision-making, adapted from Solomon et al. (2010: 314)

Figure 2: The consumer decision journey, Couri et al. (2009)
Alternatively, the retail changes have posed a challenge to retailers for the amount of information that passes through the online to offline channels on different technological devices from PC, laptops to tablets and smartphones that consumers easily adopt in their daily activities.

On one hand, online channels are more appreciated by consumers to compare products. One reason is that search on the Internet infers low cost and detailed information collection on products and services. Furthermore, online retailers provide temporal and geographical accessibility anytime and anywhere (Grewal et al., 2004). But, one limitation is that consumers cannot experience the sensory attributes of the products.

On the other hand, the offline channel is favorable. Expertise plays an important role within the offline experience, which is hardly accomplished by the online channel (Balasubramanian et al., 2005). Research shows that during the consumer journey, shoppers integrate the mobile device in the offline environment as a tool for evaluation (Court et al. 2009). It is stated that “mobile recommendation agents” (Kowatsch et al. 2010, p. 697) will increase the value of product information in physical stores for the immediate and the precise information delivered. Thus, purchase is influenced right in front of the shelf in a physical store for the type of information that mobile recommendation agents deliver (Kowatsch et al. 2010).

According to a study (Wilkie and Dickson, 1991, cited in Broeckelmann et al. 2008), 37% of shoppers visit one store before buying a product, while 19% visit two stores. Most consumers used to make price comparison offline, in a physical store. But, today, the search stage has completely changed because consumers browse online. Consumers confirm that “searching for information before making a purchase decision is a very important feature of the Internet” (Wissmann, 2002 cited in Broeckelmann et al. p. 150). A study conducted by Schijns et al. (2012) states that Internet usage is up to 87% during the consideration, search and evaluation stages.

It is inferred that the existing consumer journey model introduces the idea that the proliferation of products or brands determines consumers to consider just a few product substitutes for acquisition (Court et al. 2009). But, during showrooming, prior to the moment of purchase, consumers look at more alternatives on a similar product during the active evaluation stage because of the effortless and the convenience of comparing information by browsing online (Court et al. 2009, Verhoef et al, 2007). Furthermore, an examination of each stage of the shopping decision making process is described as it is stated in the academic research about consumers who shop across channels.
Stage 1: Search

During the search stage, commercial consumer studies report that shoppers are browsing online on their mobile or PC devices at a set of retailers that they already know and they reach to the second stage by elimination of the alternatives given (Heijden 2005). Despite the ease and the speed the search action gets compared to search at a physical store, consumers are confronted with the risk of choosing an unfamiliar retailer (Balasubramanian et al., 2005). But, research shoppers are able to control the decision process by pulling out the information helpful to them (Court et al. 2009). Then, another scenario involves in-store search. In this case, the sensorial effect delivered by the physical store influences consumers to purchase because they consider trying-on, touching and feeling an attractive attribute within the shopping decision making process (Heijden 2005, Verhoef et al. 2007).

Stage 2: Evaluation

In a multichannel setting the active evaluation phase starts when consumers learn about the product (Court et al. 2009). Factors that count are: involvement with the product, the market environment and the situational factors (Bloch et al. 1986). Then, during showrooming, consumers take into account the channel attributes, the social influence and the channel integration when choosing the retail channel for purchasing (Valentini et al. 2011). Furthermore, they are also influenced by the marketing activities such as Internet reviews, information sites and word-of-mouth recommendations, as well as in-store interactions and their past shopping experiences (Appendix 2).

During the active evaluation and the moment of purchase stages, the “attribute-driven decision making”, the “lack of channel lock-in” and the “cross-channel synergy” (Verhoef et al. 2007 p. 130) are elements to be taken into consideration when research shoppers excessively use Internet on a PC or a mobile device (Chiu et al. 2011). When Verhoef et al. (2007) refer to channel lock-in, it means that the channel on which a search was made will lead the shopper to choose the same channel for a new acquisition on a next purchase. But, during showrooming, this aspect is missing due to the cross-channel synergy that involves switching from the channel the search was made (eg. browsing online) to another channel for purchase (eg. the physical store). This aspect implies the access to free-riding across channels, which allows consumers to exploit the benefits of each channel (Chatterjee, 2010).

Academic literature on cross-channel behavior refers to the activity of channel switching during the consumer journey that is also encountered in showrooming. Based on the PPM
model (pull-push-mooring) the research conducted by Chiu et al. (2011) confirms that research shopper behavior is determined by the “push” factor that determines consumers to look for information in the physical store because they find online search undefined. Then a “pull” effect occurs when competitors from different channels encourage consumers to switch channels through attributes like lower prices or satisfactory shipping policies. The model is based on attributes such as self-efficacy and internet experience that determines a satisfactory alternative for the channel choice from the active evaluation until the moment of purchase stage, either online or in a brick-and-mortar store.

**Stage 3: Purchase**

The moment of purchase involves attributes like the quality of service, the effort of purchase, the negotiation over retail channels, the fast way of obtaining the product after purchase. Also, when purchasing online there is the risk of not receiving the product on time or having a payment problem, a privacy matter and even the futile time effort spent to purchase a product (Verhoef et al. 2007). Then, self-affirmation enables customers to have more confidence with their purchasing decision through the expertise of the sales personnel. But, across channels and mostly when browsing online, consumers feel empowered to make a better choice of the channel of purchase because they exercise their personal expertise without any external help (Chatterjee, 2010).

**Stage 4: Post-purchase**

The PPM model also refers to the channel lock-in concept mentioned by Verhoef et al. (2007), where retailers look into retaining customers on both the active evaluation and purchase stages (Chiu et al. 2011). Within the lock-in channel, consumers already know the price and the quality of product and services provided by a certain channel or retailer, which prevents them from switching retailers for a lower price, therefore they are loyal. Furthermore, Verhoef et al. (2007) confirms that consumers who are familiar with a retail channel will likely explore another competitor’s channel for comparison. That is why a positive channel lock-in is important because it lowers the level of consumer dissatisfaction despite the Internet transparency over evaluation on products and prices (Verhoef et al. 2005).

During showrooming the lack of channel lock-in is influenced by the competition that rises within the offline environment such as poor customer service or unattractive physical
environment, the malfunction of integration of online and offline channel due to the risk level that the online channel poses to shoppers (Chiu et al. 2011). This aspect opens a new discussion over the level of loyalty towards a retailer during the research shopper journey and its implications at post-purchase level.

2.4.2.2. Researcher Shopper Loyalty

The customer switching behavior implies that the shopper ends the relationship with a certain retailer and its services (Zikiene 2012). This is the consequence of inconvenience, variety seeking, new value or the refusal on behalf of the retailer to change a service or to adapt to novelty. During showrooming, consumers easily switch between channels when assessing product comparisons. Clearly, channels that focus more on price attributes are not compelling for customer loyalty. Only channels, like physical stores, that create economic and social relationship with customers are likely to raise customer loyalty (Verhoef et al. 2005). Aaker (1971) confirms that the preference over a certain product is formed from the stage of learning until the trial momentum that defines a satisfactory or unsatisfactory purchase (Valentini et al. 2011). Thus, the concept of retail loyalty infers to maintain a firm relationship with a retailer, where consumers look up at the channel as the first choice among alternatives (Toufaily et al. 2012).

Academic literature identifies satisfaction, switching costs, time and effort of search, overall image of one retailer and commitment as important values assessed during the post-purchase stage that lead to “re-buying intention” (Han et al. 2012, p. 788). Satisfaction during the cross-channel switching behavior is not considered an attribute because shoppers browse on the Internet for price comparisons at different retailers (Verhoef et al. 2005). This is the result of passive loyalty type encountered at research shoppers (Court et al. 2009). Moreover, even satisfied customers are lured by competitors’ offerings, like Amazon. But when there is low level of satisfaction, consumers are prone to switching between retail channels from offline to online (Mittal et al. 1998).

The positive overall image towards a retailer builds a trustworthy relationship. The notion of trust simplifies the process of searching across channels for the lowest price and it builds a stronger relationship between shoppers and retailers (Klein et al. 2011). Thus, shoppers are implied to bring more profit and share of wallet to the retailer, they have high customer value and they are likely to remain loyal to only one retailer (Kumar et al. 2005, cited in Horton 1984, p.48).
Finally, commitment is considered an important determinant of consumer journey for building a long-term relationship (Han et al. 2012). This last determinant presumes that recommendations to friends and family are a strong indicator of customer loyalty to a retailer along with the supplementary acquisition and repurchase from the same channel during the consumer journey (Klein et al. 2011, Lee et al. 2010).

Based on the variables explaining the current consumer shopping journey across retail channels, that are introduced in the academic literature, the following research will cover the gap in the academic literature on consumer behavior during retail showrooning. The study plans to conduct research on a product category that has not been investigated so far, that is the athletic footwear market. To continue with, an overview of the present situation of the athletic footwear market is presented below in order to outline the research study.

2.5. The Athletic Footwear Market

The athletic footwear market includes athletic, sports and active lifestyle footwear, but also performance shoes for different types of activities. Within this categorization, the athletic footwear market has faced a challenging time during the last recession. Increases in sales were noticed in the casual/fashion and outdoor shoes segment. Since 2007, sport shoes consumers are more interested in the lifestyle fashion athletic shoes, while performance shoe sales decreased by 2008 (Packaged facts, 2009).

Statistics show that in the US, the recession affected sales footwear market sales, mostly athletic and sports retailers where footwear sales at apparel stores reported 12% and sporting goods stores reported up to 7% of the total footwear retail market (Packaged facts, 2009, p.13). This decline in the footwear industry has been the result of the change in mindset of consumers and the changing patterns of purchasing behavior. Consumers have been more cautious with spending money, just by looking for the best value.

University students and young consumers are an attractive segment to reach when it comes to sport shoes, because most of them are at the age when they look into making life decisions without their parents’ involvement (Yoh et al. 2005). Then, athletic shoes are popular items for university students since they wear them more frequently. Most of them find sneakers both fashionable and functional, but some purchase shoes for a specific sport only (Research Moz, 2012).
Academic research (Hsu and Chang, 2008, Yoh et al., 2005, Dix et al. 2010) looked into the consumer behavior of students for sport shoes and the purchasing decision making influential factors. Fashionable and branded footwear are important drivers when choosing to wear sport shoes, but studies have shown that consumers look for comfortable shoes to wear (Packaged facts, 2009, p. 19). Academic research has shown that students are still influenced by peers (friends and family), by celebrities and by the brand name when buying sport shoes. However, not so many students have strong attitude toward perceived product quality and price points features (Yoh et al. 2005). Then, the level of perceived quality and satisfaction on purchase intentions have been studied by Tsiotsou (2006) that concluded that such factors lead to consumers’ level of involvement during the shopping decision making process. Nevertheless, choice is determined by psychological cues that include the perception over the availability and the price of the products (Derakhshide, 2012). Furthermore, students consider quality, price, style, promotions and distribution channel as important values of assessment during their shopping journey (Yoh et al. 2005).

To continue with, conspicuous consumption is replaced by the best value offer. According to commercial reports, consumers are savvy shoppers who make their purchase on sport footwear at Wal-Mart, Foot Locker and Payless stores in U.S. Online sales have increased since 2006; as a result there has been a prominent shift away from traditional retailers who own physical stores. But consumer research analysts report that sales will slow down by 2013 by 20% (Packaged facts, 2009, p.54). One reason is that consumers took assault of the Internet and made use of comparison websites and user reviews. Then, young consumers or generation Y, who have been raised in an information culture, are the main target for retailers because they are technology savvy and outgoing for social interaction on social networks and blogs (Derakhshide, 2012).

Consumer minds are different and they purchase in different ways. Even the research and the evaluation stages are differently assessed due to the myriad of products on the market and the existing information sources (Derakhshide, 2012). Shoppers on sport footwear look online for product information, but the websites they look over may be or not the final destination for purchasing. Internet has been found as a very common used channel when making purchases for apparel products. Conversely, academic research has proved that shoppers still go in-stores to try on products that they saw during their search online (Xu et al. 2005). Evidence of showrooming on sport footwear apparel is acknowledged by consumers’ behavior even in specialized stores such as the retailer in Maryland, US, who owns a running shoes store, as stated below in an article published on Market Watch, online version:
“Very highly specialized [He] has had people on numerous occasions come in — he apparently has very good, many different brands, good place to shop and see everything — examine all of the stuff, try on all of the stuff, make a determination about which running shoes they want to buy and then walk out or in front of them, order a couple pairs online to beat the sales tax.” (Schroeder, 2013)

Another aspect that these footwear retailers find challenging for their business is customer loyalty to the store. The emerging online footwear retail businesses provide information to consumers on store locations and product lines that are directly sold to consumers at different price points by other retailers. In this way consumers lured by good deals on a pair of athletic shoes from Zappos.com or Amazon.com are impaired to keep retail loyalty. Instead they purchase online while they skip the in-store try-on step (Packaged facts, 2009). Online outreach is one option to attract more consumers because of convenience and price point. This aspect makes it more difficult for retailers to capture more customers in their stores to purchase.

In this way, research is needed to assess whether young shoppers prefer to go online to search for information and then to go in-store to try the product. First, it is important to identify whether shoppers are involved in a cross-channel free riding behavior from the moment of search stage until the purchase stage. Secondly, it is necessary to identify which retail channels influence the behavior of switching channels. Finally, it is important to assess the importance of retail customer loyalty, confirming or disputing the terrible forecasts over the future of brick-and-mortar stores. Next chapter will outline the guidelines for the research objectives mentioned above.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this research is to understand consumer behavior while showrooming in a multichannel retail environment. Not until recently consumer research has focused on different product categories such as electronics, clothes, furniture and exercise equipment (Cummins, 2013). But research needs to expand into new product categories, even new industries where little research has been considered yet. Therefore, the focus of this research will stand within sport footwear industry, where consumers' demand predominates around lower prices and good deals, which encourage retailers to adapt to new technologies and ecommerce trends (Steinthal, D. 2012).

3.1. Research Questions

The research is divided into three objectives, detailed by further research questions:

1. To determine if consumers engage in showrooming when they purchase sport footwear
   - Is there a clear observation of retail showrooming among students who purchase sport footwear?

2. To determine the influential aspects of cross-channel buying behavior during the consumer shopping journey
   - How much does online search influence the offline shopping activity?
   - How much does offline search influence the online shopping activity?
   - Are mobile devices used during shopping for product or price comparison?
   - What attributes are valued by shoppers when they make shopping decisions?

3. To identify whether showrooming on sport footwear has an effect on customer loyalty to physical retail stores
   - Do shoppers commit to the same retailer where they purchased the sport footwear?
   - What factors determine shoppers to return to the same retailer they purchased the sport shoes?
3.2. Research Design

The proposed research plans to use a comparative design, including the collection of data through mixed methods of quantitative survey and qualitative structured interviews. Comparative design is a suitable approach because it defines a problem that affects retail business. Moreover, it aims to clarify the social alteration that is currently happening in the retail industry by addressing causal variables in retail showrooming in relation to shoppers within a cross-channel situation (Bryman et al., 2011).

The purpose of employing such a research design is to find similarities and differences, but also to understand the showrooming phenomenon within different contexts. Then the mixed methods research allows a better coordination to gather specific data and to overcome hypothetical results. Despite the arguments against the feasibility of mixed methods research (Brymen et al., 2011) the qualitative interview facilitates the data collection about personal retail experiences in comparison with the data from the quantitative survey.

The research is descriptive and its objective is to get accurate answers from respondents. Data has been collected from a random selection of the University of Edinburgh bachelor’s and master’s level students about their sport footwear purchases.

3.2.1. Quantitative Research: online survey

3.2.1.1. Online Survey Process and Questions

The survey was conducted online by using Qualtrics survey software, which is a web-based tool to build surveys. Quantitative analysis uses online self-completion questionnaire because it allows easier access to respondents.

The survey includes closed questions that identify particular aspects of research shoppers engaged in showrooming at different stages of the consumer decision making process. But, a few open questions are added, which allows respondents to exemplify in detail their choices of different online channels during the search and the evaluation stages of their shopping journey. Furthermore, there are questions that refer to the channels of purchase, the decisions that overcome after searching on product information online and offline, the determinants of the purchasing decision and the level of customer loyalty to a retailer.
Finally, personal factual questions are employed at the end of the survey, such as personal information (age, gender, employment status and location of the respondent) (Appendix 3).

3.2.1.2. Selection Criteria and Data Sampling

A non-probability sample technique is used to develop the online survey. A quota sample is chosen from a list of students at the University of Edinburgh. As much as the quota sample is not a representative one (Bryman et al., 2011), it is determined by the easy access to a sample of young adults who belong to the same academic institution. This group is also prone to engaging in showrooming for their knowledge and technical skills. Moreover, choosing this type of sampling, and not a cluster or a stratified sampling, allows the researcher to make the final selection of respondents and whom to approach for the interview.

The link of the survey from Qualtrics.com was posted on a social network website, particularly on a group of students at the University of Edinburgh for the academic year 2012 – 2013. The survey was on for completion online for two weeks in order to reach a high number of respondents. It is inferred that the greater the size of the sample, the higher the precision of the sample is (Bryman et al. 2011, p. 187). Thus, there was no limit set up for the number of respondents; therefore the absolute size of the online survey at the end comprises 142 respondents.

3.2.1.3. Data Analysis

The quantitative research looks into different determinants of consumer shopping journey that are measured by marketing scales (Bruner, 2009). The scales were used to build the online survey in order to assess the level of consumer involvement with the retail channel during the shopping journey and the attitude towards price (Mittal, 1989, Babin et al. 1994). Furthermore, the Likert scale agree – disagree, offers the respondents the opportunity to express their perceptions and attitudes towards specific scenarios of shopping journey. Then, a bipolar scale is used to rate the respondent position on the service quality with a retailer and the features that will determine the shopper to become a loyal customer to the respective retailer. The final data is downloaded in Excel, where statistical inferences are conducted.
Furthermore, a few of the variables where main measure scales were used are described with reference to a few questions in use.

Stage 1: Search

Involvement

Involvement during a purchase decision is defined as a variable that indicates the level of relevance of a particular stimulus within a shopping decision situation. The level of involvement depends on the utilitarian or hedonic value of the shopping situation. Therefore, the type of product presumes whether it implies permanent involvement or low-involvement. Hence, in the situation of showrooming, the choice of the store where consumers buy sport footwear is mostly a utilitarian value where the outcome depends on the value for money payoff. In this situation the consumer is deliberately choosing the right or wrong purchase decision based on the attributes that count the most on the purchase intentions. (Mittal, 1989) The question referring to the importance of store selection when purchasing sport footwear (Figure 3) requires a certain level of knowledge over the store chosen for purchase, which can be given by recommendations from friends and family, or website reviews. This question is addressed in more detail during the interview in order to learn about the level of involvement with the physical store during shopping.

![Figure 3: Involvement with the offline channel of purchase](https://qualtrics.com)

Q4. When selecting the store I can buy the sport shoes I want

(1 = the lowest, 7 = the highest)

I do not care to what store I buy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I care a great deal to which store I buy sport shoes

Source: Qualtrics.com
Stage 2: Evaluation

Price

A shopping value measure is taken into account in order to determine the utilitarian value of the shopping journey. Therefore, price is one variable that is highly considered during showrooming in order to determine whether the shopping process is valuable or valueless (Babin et al. 1994). Consumers’ intention is to get the product they want at the lowest price in order to feel rewarded and content for their search (Babin et al. 1994) (Figure 4). Then, the hedonic dimension of shopping implies the enjoyable experience of purchasing a product for a good value. Some shoppers just visit stores, they do not make any purchase, and instead they look for gratification fulfillment. Also a bargain perception is thought to be considered a hedonic value for the excitement of the purchase (Babin et al. 1994). This variable is also emphasized during the interview in order to learn about the impact of price on shoppers and at what moment of the shopping journey it becomes a decisive factor for showrooming.

Q12. Please select one option only on the statement below

When I want to purchase sport shoes in-store, price is very important. Therefore I look for

- The lowest price
- Sport shoes on sale
- Discounts and promotions
- I buy sport shoes that I like no matter the price

Source: Qualtrics.com

Figure 4: The shopper attitude toward price
Stage 3: Purchase

Assertiveness

During the purchasing stage the interaction between consumer-employee at the moment of search and transaction is important to analyze. In the store the salesperson is playing a major role in helping the customer to look for the right product, to offer information about products and determine customers to be satisfied with the experience within the store. The research looks into the level of assertiveness of the customers while they keep searching in-store for the product available. Whether shoppers express the honest intent of their in-store visit is determined by their initiation into conversation with the in-store salesperson. During showrooming, customers prefer to avoid interaction with the store personnel mostly because they are equipped with the right devices (eg. smartphones or tablets) that will deliver the right information they look for. Thus, question 6 in the online survey (Figure 5), on a Likert scale agree – disagree, is likely to infer the level of assertiveness of the consumer while looking for information in-store (Richins, 1983).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I often feel frustrated when I fail to find what I want in the store when I purchase sport shoes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When there’s a wide variety of sport shoes in-store I find hard to make a decision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually request in-store assistance to look for the sport shoes I want</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am uncomfortable asking store employees about location of products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always ask the sales personnel about a recommendation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get disappointed when I do not find the sport shoes I want</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually ask the sales personnel about sport shoes on sale or any other promotions in store</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: In-store shopper assertiveness while searching for the product
Stage 4: Post – purchase

Customer value satisfaction

The notion of consumer value creation is created mostly by in-store experience and the in-store personnel. Building a relationship between customer and retailer is crucial for the business evolvement. Retailers fear that their business is in jeopardy due to new consumer behavior that keeps switching channels of purchase. A bipolar scale (agree-disagree) assesses the level of customer loyalty to the same retailer where the purchase is made through statements that measure the store’s staff involvement during the sale, the variety and exclusivity of in-store merchandise, the in-store experience (Figure 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q18. I return to the same store to purchase sport shoes because:</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>staff was extremely helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>store has a wide selection and the latest sport shoes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>store has good price offerings for my budget</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>store is very popular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the store environment offers unique experience to its customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the store has unique and exclusive styles of sport shoes that I won't find anywhere else</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the store has promotions that I will not find at other retailers (online or offline retailers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: The level of customer loyalty towards the retail channel after last purchase

3.2.1.4. Limitations

One limitation of the online survey is that it may lead to an indefinite non-response rate. This means that participants may start to answer questions, but they never complete the survey. Then, when the online survey was created, a logic flow was implemented by skipping certain questions when respondents will give an answer that does not require more details. Hence,
certain questions may have a higher number of respondents than the initial number of respondents who completed the survey until the end.

Finally, the online survey does not exemplify a particular category of sport shoes and there is a general nomination of sport footwear. So respondents will not think of a particular sport shoes category. But, the survey was designed in this way to capture more respondents to answer the survey despite the purpose of usage of the sport shoes they purchase. But, this limitation compensates with the interview which will give a clear explanation of the purpose of the sport shoes interviewees purchased.

3.2.2. Qualitative Research: interview

3.2.2.1. Interview Process and Questions

The qualitative method covers structured interviews with shoppers who purchase sport footwear. This method ensures a certain level of reliability in responses and a cumulative idea of a real shopping experience. Based on one-to-one approach, each interviewee receives the same context and the same number of questions about their shopping journey on their latest sport footwear purchase.

Open questions are employed in order to allow the respondent to present more details about the personal shopping experience. Moreover, different situations and answers to certain questions can address further questions to explore new ideas about consumers within a cross-channel shopping experience. Questions are also pre-coded according to the decision making process variables in order to create the interview more structured and easy to follow. Confidentiality of interviewees is respected and information is limited to personal information, such as age, country of origin and occupation (Appendix 4).

3.2.2.2. Selection Criteria and Data Sampling

The structured interview uses a convenience sampling by selecting eight respondents who stated their availability to participate at the interview by giving their e-mail address during the online survey. The respondents are Masters and PHD students who attend different programs in the Business School at the University of Edinburgh.
Interviews were held at the Business School, University of Edinburgh, for convenience reasons. During the interview, participants were recorded. Therefore, issues of confidentiality were discussed before starting the interview and respondents agreed that their insights could be recorded and used publicly. Participants were asked to narrate their shopping experience when they purchased their last pair of sport footwear while interviewer’s interventions with set questions kept the fluency of their story.

3.2.2.3. **Data Analysis**

Grounded theory is used to analyze the qualitative data. Data is integrated into themes and categories that belong to the stages of the decision making process. Then, selective coding is applied after reviewing the interview transcripts through the input of certain codes into categories of interest of the shopping journey. The data collection throughout the interview plans to keep a similar structure with the variables that are analyzed throughout the online survey.

3.2.2.4. **Limitations**

One limitation stands for sampling size, which is not representative enough because the findings may just generalize facts, but not specific information related to initial research. Then, there is the possibility of getting inaccurate responses or invalidity of the variable that the researcher expects to find out by selecting shoppers who may not fall within the research shopper category. Finally, one more limitation stands in the quality of the recording, but overall necessary information could be processed.

3.3. **Online Survey Pre – Test**

A pilot online survey was administered to a sample of 49 respondents among which 64% led to full completion of the survey. Piloting is an important research instrument to identify limitations of the survey and address a comprehensible final version for the sample of interest of the research. A random sample of United States (U.S.) citizens from different American cities participated at the pilot survey for a couple of reasons. First, the concept of showrooming in retail has been a predominant popular trend in U.S. in the last two years, as
shown in the previous chapter, where U.S. research companies and press discuss about the changes within retail (Placed 2013, Campbell 2013, Knowledge Wharton 2012).

The pilot survey includes 26 questions that address the consumer journey experience. Therefore, it was assessed the level of involvement when choosing a retail channel to purchase sport footwear, the frequency of the device used at different stages of the shopping journey and the attributes that control their shopping decisions. The pilot study clarified some repetitive aspects of the survey and also a few details that would create confusion to respondents. Furthermore, pre-testing facilitated the structure and the fluency of the questions from the final version of the online survey. It also simplified the online questionnaire by addressing fewer questions in the final version and by adding more accurate display logic of questions in the Qualtrics Survey Software.

Moreover, the pilot questionnaire enabled the researcher to design a new questionnaire for interviews with different shoppers. To overcome the limitations of the online survey, the interview could deliver detailed aspects about personal shopping experiences. As it follows, next chapter will present the findings of the mixed method research, followed by a critical analysis.
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the results from the online survey and the structured interview. The shopping journey of all the survey participants is described below through a series of observations related to the drivers of retail showroming on sport footwear purchases. Results of each method research are placed separately in order to carry a comparative and critical discussion.

4.1. Findings

4.1.1. Quantitative Online Survey

The online survey was distributed to 143 participants, but only 73% fully completed the questionnaire. Students at University of Edinburgh, age 19-25 years old, from different backgrounds and distinct nationalities, participated to the study amidst whom 43% were male and 57% were female. As mentioned previously about the limitations of the online survey, the number of responses varies: it is either higher or lower than the sample of respondents who fully completed the survey. The reason is that certain questions had a skipping condition when responses would not qualify for the variables desired to analyze. Also, some participants started to fill out the survey, but failed to complete it.

4.1.1.1. Search and Evaluation Stages

Factors of influence when choosing sport footwear online and offline channels

The choice of sport shoes depends on certain attributes. On a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the first and 5 is the last attribute of choice, comfort is placed on the top list of respondents' preferences by 27%, followed by design and price (Table 1).
Looking at the lowest attribute on the list above, due to the Likert scale constraint by nominating 1, the highest value, and 5, the lowest value, the relationship between the factors of influence on sport footwear purchase determines a slight discrepancy when comparing the mean of all the variables (Figure 7). This suggests that shoppers consider brand name as the last determinative factor of their purchase decision compared to price. Thus, price is not a relevant determinant for switching retail channels during showrooming, because shoppers look the most at product features.

Table 1: Factors of influence on sport footwear purchase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Comfortable wear</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Quality of the product</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Brand name</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = the first attribute of preference
5 = the last attribute of preference

Looking at the lowest attribute on the list above, due to the Likert scale constraint by nominating 1, the highest value, and 5, the lowest value, the relationship between the factors of influence on sport footwear purchase determines a slight discrepancy when comparing the mean of all the variables (Figure 7). This suggests that shoppers consider brand name as the last determinative factor of their purchase decision compared to price. Thus, price is not a relevant determinant for switching retail channels during showrooming, because shoppers look the most at product features.

Figure 7: Scatter plot comparing factors of purchase influence means
In terms of in-store price, 40% of respondents look into sales on sport footwear, followed by discounts and promotions (Table 2). To determine this result, only respondents, who selected price as a general attribute of influence for their shopping decisions were forwarded to answer supplementary questions about the implications of price during sport footwear shopping.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sport shoes on sale</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Discounts and promotions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I buy sport shoes that I like no matter the price</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The lowest price</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Consumer attitude towards price in-store

Conversely, when searching online, price matters the most for 52% of shoppers, followed by variety of merchandise (23%) (Table3). An open answer, like “Other”, has offered the opportunity to respondents to explain what other factors determine their online decisions. Thus, “trying on” was mentioned several times. This infers that in-store shopping experience is important compared to shopping online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Exclusive sport shoes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brand name retailer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Consumer attitude towards price online
Factors of influence on specific devices

Browsing online for information on sport footwear is completed by 63% of participants. When asked about the use of the mobile device in-store, 46% respondents do not use it for shopping purposes, but to talk to friends and family. To continue with how shoppers use devices like laptop, PC and mobile phones during the consideration and the evaluation stages, respondents were asked to choose from the influential factors that alter their purchase decision online and offline. So, during search stage, 77% participants who browse online on PC look at price, also at deals, discounts and promotions. Furthermore, 45% respondents will search for store location online on their mobile phone, followed by 38% respondents who will look for product information on their mobile device. In-store search resumes to variables of interest like price (90%), followed by deals, discounts and promotions (83%) (Table 4).

This data proves that mobile phone is a tool of geo-location information, but not a shopping driver. Moreover, shoppers will use their PC devices to look over a better deal, which assumes that consumers are not browsing online while they are in-store, as it is assumed to take place during showrooming.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retail channels</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Deals, discounts, promotions</th>
<th>Product information</th>
<th>Store location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N (%)</td>
<td>N (%)</td>
<td>N (%)</td>
<td>N (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-store</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online PC</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online mobile</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Red highlight = the highest % are the drivers that influence purchase on retail channels.

Table 4: Decision factors on sport footwear purchases on different retail channels.
Swi**ching channels**

Participants will go to another store when they do not find the pair of sport shoes they look for. This statement results from 63% of responses; while 14% respondents will choose to go home and purchase the sport footwear they want online (Figure 8). This result infers that shoppers are determined to look for the pair of sport shoes they want by visiting more stores, but this is not a result of showrooming. 

A more detailed explanation related to the reasons why shoppers will switch retail channels is determined by Likert scale agree – disagree, where variables indicate that 48% of shoppers are determined to find a lower price in another store. Moreover, the distance to the store and the level of satisfaction with the in-store service will determine shoppers to switch retail channels (Figure 9). Hence, the search for a better deal is predominant within sport footwear shoppers who are likely to continue showrooming in different physical stores.
4.1.1.2. Purchase Stage

The level of involvement of research shopper with the channel of purchase

Participants to the online survey start their search on sport shoes by going to the same store they purchased the former sport shoes (36%), which denotes a considerable level of loyalty. Conversely, 35% respondents will visit different retail stores or they will browse online (22%) for sport footwear (Table 5). This indicates that the physical store is still important for sport footwear purchase for 24% of respondents while 23% will not care to which store they will make a purchase (Figure 10). Then, 49% participants declare that the time given to search in-store for a pair of sport footwear shoes is more than 15 minutes. So, the purchase decision is not immediate; consumers take their time to evaluate and search for the product they are looking for.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I go to the store I usually buy sport shoes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I visit different stores that sell sport shoes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I browse online</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I ask friends or family for store</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>recommendations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I read website reviews or I check social media</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Consumer decision to purchase sport footwear

![Graph showing the level of significance of the offline channel of purchase means in comparison with the % of responses on a Likert scale 1 to 7 (1 = the highest, 7 = the lowest).]
Reaction to variety seeking in-store

Variety in a store determines shoppers to decide upon the purchase or to switch to another retailer. In correlation with the level of switching the channel of purchase, the Likert scale agree – disagree confirms that 47% participants to the survey agree that too much variety in-store challenges shoppers to take immediate purchase decisions. When shoppers will feel frustrated because they do not find what they want, 31% of respondents will ask for recommendations from the in-store employees. So, they will not leave to other stores. Then, 35% of respondents will not ask for in-store sales or promotions, so they would rather search online on any mobile device for other stores where they would find the product they want (Table 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I often feel frustrated when I fail to find what I want in the store when I purchase sport shoes</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I get disappointed when I do not find the sport shoes I want</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>When there's a wide variety of sport shoes in-store I find hard to make a decision</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I usually request in-store assistance to look for the sport shoes I want</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I always ask the sales personnel about a recommendation</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am uncomfortable asking store employees about location of products</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Variety seeking determinant during shopping journey on sport footwear

The shopping experience

Participants who responded the online survey chose three factor criteria that determine a positive shopping experience. 94% of participants will likely return to the same sport shoes retailer if the store has a wide selection of sport shoes. Moreover, price represents an important determinant; hence 94% of respondents will prefer the same store if only it has a good price offering within their budget range. Finally, staff’s attitude is important to make the shopper delighted with the in-store shopping experience (Figure 11).
4.1.1.3. Post – purchase Stage

The level of loyalty to a sport footwear store

Loyalty to a store where participants will purchase sport footwear is highly defined by the instability of their purchase decision. 38% of respondents will still continue to look for stores where they will find better deals; while 22% will go to the same store they always made purchases on a similar product category (Figure 12). Thus, data shows that consumers are likely to engage in showrooming for sport footwear purchases.
4.1.2 Qualitative Structured Interview

The structured interview employed students (7 females and 1 male) at the University of Edinburgh who narrated their shopping journey about their last purchase of a sport footwear item. By following the same consumers shopping journey schema, a tabular analysis is employed on different themes and concepts that relate to retail showrooming. A sample of the interview answers with one of the participants is provided in Appendix 5. Consequently, the results plan to address explanatory issues that were missed throughout the online survey in order to correlate with the findings from the quantitative part above.

4.1.2.1. Theme 1: search

Results divide search for sport footwear into online and in-store retailers. Interview participants looked online on their laptop device for the pair of sport shoes they wanted to purchase, as three of the respondents mention. Online search resumed not only to one sport footwear retailer but to several. All the interviewees who searched online looked at a sport footwear retailer that has offline and online presence. Here, they compared a couple or the same apparel item. Other three respondents opted in to look at various in-store retailers at their home city and from Edinburgh, or by comparison in two different cities in UK.
4.1.2.2. Theme 2: in-store purchase decision

Interviewees visit stores for several reasons: to try on sport shoes, to obtain information over new arrivals or products in general, to just look around and to check prices. Moreover, the shopping experience is important by the ability to touch and feel the merchandise displayed. Thus, the brick-and-mortar store is the place where shoppers will make their shopping activity more enjoyable.

When participants were asked about the level of information they have before leaving the house for in-store shopping, they declared that information knowledge is important to them before the actual purchase of sport shoes because it gratifies their expectations. So, it infers that they will start their search online before going in-store. Then respondents believe that learning about products at the moment of purchase engages them better in the shopping process. Therefore, it is inferred that shoppers will go for showrooming in-store after they made an online search. It denotes that the physical store is still a valuable place for delivering a pleasant shopping experience.

4.1.2.3. Theme 3: evaluation

The evaluation purchase decision stage is determined by several drivers that the interview participants mention. Product features, such as design and color are highly considered, followed by price and the level of comfort of the sport shoes they want to buy. Conversely, brand name plays a low level of involvement when a sport shoe is evaluated.

Product comparison is frequently encountered during retail showrooming. This aspect is also discussed in more detail during the structured interview where respondents compare sport footwear over product features (design, color, comfort, durability), price, return policy and online customer reviews. When asked, what devices they use to make such comparisons, respondents mentioned that they make product comparisons online on their laptop. In regards of the attitude towards mobile devices as a shopping instrument, interviewees do not find it as useful due to the small screen display.
4.1.2.4. **Theme 4: purchase**

According to the interview findings, the channel of purchase of sport footwear was in-store for all the participants at a multi-brand retailer. Participants were driven by different factors, such as trying the product, price and discounts. Then, friend recommendations, brand, product variety and the level of comfort of the product are just other factors that played an important role within the purchase decision at that particular store.

4.1.2.5. **Theme 5: post – purchase**

Shopping experience satisfaction determines the level of loyalty to the retail channel of purchase. So, in order to find out whether shoppers would return to the same store they purchased the sport shoes, it is necessary to learn about the drivers that will influence their loyalty to a sport footwear retailer. Therefore, interview respondents are likely to return to the same store if the staff is friendly and they make a pleasant in-store experience. Then, loyalty to a certain retailer is influenced by the notifications to customers about new arrivals, sales and discounts, the distance to the store and the brands stocked by retailer.

4.2. **Discussion**

The research conducted here investigated consumer behavior during the shopping journey. By following each stage of shopping decision making process, the purpose of this study is to identify shoppers engaged in showrooming on sport footwear purchases. Another aspect concerns the level of influence of the online and the offline channels upon shoppers throughout their shopping journey. Moreover, my research looked into the identification of the cross-channel behavior among students and how much they are influenced to switch retail channels. Finally, customer retail loyalty is analyzed by classifying the determinants that influence customers to come back to the same retailer they made the purchase initially.

To determine the first objective of the research, whether retail showrooming exists among students when they purchase sport footwear, it is important to learn about the purpose of the purchase and the drivers that define the shopping process within a cross-channel behavior. So, the purpose of shopping affects the motivation to buy, but also the channel of purchase (Schoenbachler et al., 2002). According to the interview results, respondents purchased their
last pair of sport footwear because they needed to replace their old pair of sport shoes or because it was a necessity for a sport activity (e.g., hiking mentioned by Interviewee 2 or basketball mentioned by Interviewee 7). Most of the interview participants found the need for self-affirmation by buying a new pair of comfortable sport shoes, due to their moving to a new location, in Edinburgh, to study (Chatterjee, P., 2010). Furthermore, to continue the idea mentioned by Schoenbachler et al. (2002), the purpose of shopping also affects the channel of purchase. Compared to electronics that have functional utility, purchasing sport footwear implies personal attachment, as stated below by one of the interview participants:

“A laptop, for instance is a functional object, it is good or bad. But for sport shoes, it is completely about your own feeling” (Interviewee 6, female, 24 years)

So, the statement above raises up the discussion on what aspects determine consumers to engage in a free-riding behavior within a cross-channel retail environment and whether sport footwear consumers are research shoppers, as presented in the academic literature (Tang et al., 2001, Verhoef et al. 2007). Therefore, 33% of participants of the online will keep searching online for sport shoes at cheaper price. Afterwards they will go in-store to purchase them. To confirm this finding the interviewees stated that they started the search and the evaluation of the product online and then continued with more evaluation of the product offline where they also completed the purchase. Furthermore, the existing research shows evidence of a cross-channel behavior during the shopping journey, which is synthetized by the model below (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Retail showromming across channels
Verhoe et al. (2007) state that, during showrooming, consumers look at similar products or brands online because it is a convenient channel. Moreover, they browse online because of the preference they hold over a particular sport shoe brand that shoppers have always purchased, like Adidas or Nike. But, according to the online survey responses, 56% participants are not influenced by the brand name when they buy sport footwear. Furthermore, social networks are an influential factor that creates awareness over trends in fashion or new products among students. One respondent (Interviewee 3, female, 24 years) learned about the sport shoes from one photo post of a fashion blogger on Instagram. Then, her search extended to different online sites of sport apparel retailers in order to learn more information about the product.

As stated in the literature, comparison on different online retailers, like pricescan.com, Amazon or Zappos infers a low level of consumer involvement with any retailer (Chatterjee, 2010). The familiarity with the retail channel, the price of the product, the perception of security of the information and the guarantees are just a few drivers that delimit the level of consumer involvement during the shopping process (Schoenbachler et al, 2002). In terms of the level of familiarity with the retailer, the study shows that 36% of respondents will go to the store they usually purchase sport footwear, this proves that they return to the same retailer because of a pleasant previous experience they had. Equally, 35% of consumers will visit different stores. To this extent, the level of purchase involvement at a specific retailer is not high and there is the possibility of showrooming at offline level.

Based on academic literature, other drivers of influence within a cross-channel retail environment are convenience, a fast and reliable delivery of the products, a favorable return policy, a good deal and exclusive or early access to products (Utter, 2013, Chatterjee, 2010). When shopping for sport footwear, participants consider other attributes that fit the purpose of their purchase. For example, the product features and comfort are the primary elements mentioned during the interview. Then, product comparison introduces new variables such as price, product features in terms of design, color and purpose of the sport shoes, customer satisfaction and return policy. Furthermore, participants at the online survey place on top of their preferences the comfort wear of the shoes, which implies that this attribute could be confirmed only in-store. Therefore, this is demonstrates that shoppers will go for more evaluation of the product at offline channel.

Likewise, Verhoef et al. (2007) refer to the channel lock-in as an important determinant for consumers purchase decision when they choose the same channel for purchase on which the search was made. But, during retail showrooming, consumers switch retail channels for different purposes and this is confirmed by the existing research study. In terms of product
evaluation, consumers usually reflect upon many brands and products to make comparisons, but only a few of these are considered for acquisition (Court et al., 2009). But, participants at the interview evaluate either one or two products online and offline.

Then, the purchase decision comes upon one product that they try on in-store. According to the study, amidst the factors of influence that determine students to switch retail channels, there is also the failure of finding the sport shoes they want to purchase on a particular retail channel. 63% of respondents will leave the store for another one in this case. Interviewee 3, for example, planned to purchase the Nike pair of shoes she saw on Instagram from Nike store. But, since Nike store is not located in Edinburgh, she visited several sport shops. The only store that was selling the pair of sport shoes she wanted was Footlocker. Not only that it was the only store that sold this pair of sport shoes, but the store also sold the product at a lower price than the Nike online store. Therefore, this shopper was engaged in showrooming and placed a great consideration on price too.

The perception over the deal or bargain is highly discussed in commercial consumer reports and mass media about retail showroaming. Consumers, who are exposed to such a variety of retail channels, turn into “special shoppers” (Moschis (1976) cited in Lee et al., 2008) where price is a considerable determinant of their purchase decisions. The attitude towards price for sport footwear shoppers is important, but it is not the only driver of influence for sport footwear purchases. Study shows that shoppers will be influenced by sales, discounts and promotions and mostly student discounts on particular brands:

“Sales and discounts influence me a lot in my purchasing decision. For example Adidas offers 30% student discount and this is a good incentive to go for the purchase” (Interviewee 8, female, 23)

Nevertheless, other respondents do not care as much for the price than for the level of comfort of the sport shoes. Thus, such shoppers will pay even more if the sport shoes suits their personal needs:

“I looked for sport shoes that would help me with the problems I have: arch and pain in the feet that I usually get from walking too much. […] I would pay any price if I find the shoes that fulfill my need.” (Interviewee 5, female, 26)
But the aspect of pricing still fluctuates in terms of the search and the evaluation of the product when shoppers free-ride across retail channels. Therefore, the next objective of the research is to determine the influential determinants within cross-channel behavior during the consumer shopping journey at online and offline retail channels.

Academic literature states that customers control the decision process by pulling out information necessary to them within the cross-channel shopping behavior (Court et al., 2009). There are different shopping attitudes toward the first retail channel choice (Lee et al., 2008). As shown in the research study, participants of the online survey start the search over the product at the brick-and-mortar store they always purchased sport shoes, but if they find the store has an unsatisfactory variety of products, shoppers will visit more offline retailers. Conversely, interview respondents started their search online and then they went in-store to check the product.

Verhoef et al. (2007) mention the possibility of negotiation over the channel of purchase. There is also the risk to choose unfamiliar retailer than the one on which purchases were always made, for other attributes, such as novelty (Heijden, 2006). For example, in the case of Interviewee 7, the concept of a new store where customers can search online, then visit the store to try the product and finally, the retailer will order the pair of shoes online, is the result of multi-channel synergy mentioned by Verhoef et al. (2007). This type of retailer facilitates the shopping decision making by minimizing the shopping trips to other stores and preventing from switching retail channels. This is highly recommended in the academic literature to combat the migration of consumers to different retailers (Verhoef et al. 2007, Lee et al. 2010, Kollman et al. 2012, Chatterjee 2010).

It is important to acknowledge at what moment of the shopping journey, shoppers feel influenced to switch channels. It may be hypothesized that online search influences the offline shopping activity. One argument is that online search is relative important to consumers because of the temporal and the geographical accessibility; shoppers can access anytime, anywhere, as online stores do not have a closing schedule (Grewal et al., 2004). Moreover, online retailers offer product information, as well as product variety. According to the online survey, 44% of respondents will switch retail channels if there is a long distance to the store. Then, interview respondents confirm that their search starts always online, while just 22 % of online survey participants will browse online for information. The latter observation determines online search as an undefined process (Chiu et al., 2011). Nevertheless, when respondents, who strictly browse online retailers, were asked which online sites they search on, 27% participants search on multi-brand retail sites, which most of them do not have a physical store, like Zappos and ASOS. But search predominates on
retailers that have a multi-channel presence, such as Sports Direct. Then, 19% of respondents in the online survey search Amazon, a retail channel that is assumed to be the primary threat to brick-and-mortar stores close-downs as cited in media (McIntyre et al., 2013).

Lee et al. (2008) state that highly involved shoppers frequently visit internet shopping sites and purchase the product from internet. This is not the case for the sport footwear shoppers. According to the interview respondents, search for product information is frequently made online, because there is no pressure and consumers take their time for a detailed research on product features and price. Additionally, learning about the product before going out in-store is relatively important for the rest of interview respondents because reviews about the product information they find online create a higher level of interest for the product, but also responsiveness to any purchase action within the shopping decision making process. However, the nature of the product category determines offline search too, in order to confirm the information acquired, and to evaluate the features of the product in detail. At this stage sport footwear shoppers will determine their purchase decision:

“I believe that sport shoes are very personal, it is a personal experience, it is about how you feel them and how you like them” (Interviewee 6, female)

Interviewee 6 and Interviewee 4 do not rely so much on online information about sport footwear. Shopping for this product category is an experience that must be lived in-store. The shopping experience is also attractive to them because of the sensorial drivers, like touching and feeling the product (Verhoef et al., 2007). Trying the product in person is extremely important mostly for “experiential products” (Balasubramanian et al. (2005) cited in Lee et al., 2008, p.199). Tangibility moderates the relationship between shopping orientations and the intention to shop via internet (Vijayasarathy (2003) cited in Lee et al., 2008). This is why the interview respondents decided to go in-store after their online search. It is true that brick-and-mortar stores do not offer the same accessibility of temporally fulfillment as online does when it concerns payment process and search of the product. But one benefit of a physical store is that it offers immediate accessibility and collection of the product (Chatterjee, 2010). When online survey respondents were asked about their first step when they decide to purchase sport shoes, 35% answered that they will visit different stores that sell sport shoes. Then if the store does not hold the pair of sport shoes they look for, consumers will leave the store and continue their search still on other offline channels.
This infers that physical stores are still important for consumer purchasing decision process. 62% of respondents will go for specialty sport apparel stores, while 11% will purchase from online retailers. The results lead to another aspect highly discussed in media and commercial consumer reports and studied by a few academic researchers: retail showrooming happens when mobile device interferes as a tool of search or even purchase while consumers are in-stores and cannot make an immediate purchase decision (Kantar Retail 2013, Foolproof 2013, Google 2012).

Commercial consumer reports who looked into the consumer behavior for mobile show that consumers use their mobile phone to socialize, to use apps, to compare retailers (Vibes, 2012), to search information on products and reviews, to find store location (comScore, 2013). Academic literature says that mobile agents will increase the value of product information in physical stores for immediate and precise information (Kowatsch et al., 2010). As much as academics emphasize the utilitarian value of mobile shopping that it is a convenient activity for shoppers to save time in obtaining product information through different applications, while travelling to the shopping destination (Yang et al. 2010), the existing research disputes these affirmations. Thus, online survey respondents use the mobile phone to talk to friends and family. During shopping, study reveals that mobile device is used as a shopping tool just for store location. So, assumptions stated on mobile phone usage during showrooming are not valid as shown from the existing research data, where shoppers do not search for product information or price. Interview respondents do not use their mobile phone either, when shopping in general because:

“[…] display is too small, and it is hard to see the product. You have to scroll a lot and you cannot see the product from different angles as you could see it on a tablet” (Interviewee 4, female, 24)

In the case of sport footwear purchase, shoppers will check on their mobile device information about store location, like Interviewee 2. Then, a tablet device, like IPad, would be highly used for shopping because it is more “comfortable to sit in the bed or on the sofa” at home (Interviewee 4). Moreover, consumers can watch TV and whenever they see some products that interest them, they will browse immediately online, on their tablet, on product information or price (Interviewee 4). Thus, the channel of decision making for the purchase is still the offline channel. In this situation, the experience for acquiring a sport shoe is determinative. Other factors, like trying the product and listening to store personnel
recommendations, customer service and variety of in-store merchandise will highly influence consumers’ purchase decision (Lee et al., 2008). To this extent, product variety is another strong determinant to switching retail channels. In this situation, asking the store personnel for recommendations or any in-store sales is a solution to fight against the frustration of not finding the product needed:

“I choose this store because it is a small venue, it has enough choices but not too many. This is important factor me because if the choice is too big I cannot decide. Then you can have in-store your personal assistant who helps you to choose from and recommends products upon your preference." (Interviewee 6, female, 24)

The statement above falls into the last research objective about the implications of retail showrooming on sport footwear purchase and the aspect of customer loyalty to offline retailers. Schoenbachler et al. (2002) support the idea that shoppers should cross-channel fairly easy in the sense of buying online and then returning the product in-store if customers are not satisfied. This implies a successful business model within a multi-channel retail environment. Multi-channel shoppers are regarded loyal to retailers than single channel shoppers (Lee et al., 2008).

However, commercial consumer reports (Placed 2013, Harris Interactive 2013) show that research shoppers engaged in showrooming are less likely to portray such a behavior due to the myriad of alternatives that retailers give for comparison. It is predicted that physical stores will go out of business more and more due to the free-riding consumer behavior across channels (Kristin, 2013, Tang et al., 2001). Most of these shoppers switch retail channels and seek the best deal, so there is a low level of loyalty towards a specific retailer.

Loyalty is conditioned by the level of customer satisfaction, a variable that will determine consumers to revisit the store (Lee et al., 2008). Customers expect to get outstanding experience by integrating offline and online, but this experience is delivered mostly by in-store personnel. The expertise of the store staff determines self-affirmation, which enables customers to have more confidence with their purchasing decision (Chatterjee, 2010). The results from the interviews show that once the store personnel is helpful and knowledgeable about the product, they will return to the store in the future (Interviewees 1, 4 and 5):
“I need to feel they (the staff) will take good care of me. Otherwise I will not go back.”
(Interviewee 5, female, 26)

But experience is also related to the atmosphere within the store, as well as the merchandise display, or the cleanliness within the store. These aspects enable shoppers to easily find what they need.

Then, another factor is related to the past purchases, whether customers purchased from the same retailer. This aspect is a predictive determinant for future purchases on a particular channel where experience plays an important role (Schoenbachler et al., 2002). In the case of Interviewee 6, she has been a loyal customer to the same sport footwear store for more than ten years. What makes her come back to the same retailer is the personalized experience:

“You can have in-store your personal assistant, who helps you to choose from and who recommends products upon your preferences” (Interviewee 6, female, 24)

Once purchase is made, shoppers feel more emotionally connected to retailer (Fleming, 2013), but respondents to the interviews are less likely to return to the same retailer. They will keep on looking across channels and find the convenient retail channel of purchase. Then, online survey respondents will still consider the in-store product variety, the price and, lastly, the store personnel, determinants of their return to the same retailer they purchased the sport shoes. This denotes that there is no loyalty for either online or offline channels. More likely, a personalized experience within a multi-channel retail environment will make shoppers come back and spend more time in-store and purchase. Then, as Lempert (2002) mentions, one retailer builds a relationship with customers by sending email notifications of new releases and by reminding shoppers of old recommendations. This is what the interview respondents would appreciate in terms of becoming a loyal customer to that sport footwear retailer they made the purchase.

The research results show that the concept of showroo ming for sport footwear purchases exists for consumers who switch retail channels during the evaluation stage of the consumer shopping journey. Consumers are exposed to impulsive purchase behavior in-store. This implies that consumers who opt-in for online purchases and think they saved money, they
are less likely to involve in impulse buying (Chatterjee, 2010). Consumers who showroom do not exhibit such behavior.

To continue with, researchers who published consumer reports, have tested their assumptions over consumers engaged in showrooming for product categories, like electronics. Then, consumer reports declared that Amazon is guilty for the decline of the number of shoppers’ in-stores. This is not confirmed by the existing research study on sport footwear purchase. Predictions that there will be less physical stores in the future in favor of the online retailers are continuously made. Additionally, academic research shows vaguely aspects about consumer behavior during the consumer shopping decision making process, but a multi-channel retail activity is mostly analyzed to understand how consumers use integrated retail channels. The existing research study shows that consumers who purchase sport footwear are showrooming: they will start search online, they will evaluate the product online and offline, and they will purchase the product in-store.

As the final destination of purchase is the physical store, this aspect refutes the assumptions made by commercial consumer reports. The brick-and-mortar store is still an important channel, mostly for sport footwear shopping, where consumers are highly influenced to buy. As, for the post-purchase stage within the shopping journey, consumers do not show loyalty to any retailer because of the alternatives that exist across retail channels. These aspects lead to the last chapter where overall conclusions are made about the research thesis and the implications that the research study has on retailers.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

The existing research studies retail showrooming, which is the recent retail tendency encountered across shoppers. Learning about consumer behavior during the shopping journey carries consideration over the shoppers’ attitude when choosing online or offline channels at different stages of their shopping decision making process. The study has been applied on sports footwear, which has faced a considerable decline in sales due to economic factors and the change in consumer behavior toward shoe purchases. A sample of students was taken for research to learn about their shopping journey and their free-riding behavior across retail channels. The study looks into each stage of the decision making process in order to learn about the drivers of influence when switching channels from online to offline and vice versa. Consequently, the aspect of customer loyalty towards a retailer is undertaken. Finally, the study plans to assess the significance of the brick-and-mortar store and how likely consumers still value their shopping experience inside the store.

5.1. Overview of Retail Showrooming

Evidence about retail showrooming has been found in commercial studies that show consumers who start their shopping journey in-store and they complete the purchasing stage at another retailer. Conversely, academic literature states that shoppers engage within a cross-channel shopping activity by switching from online to offline channels. Compared to electronics, which is one product category frequently analyzed in such studies, the sport footwear market is expected to confirm the results from commercial reports. But, the shopping process is determined by the utilitarian or the hedonic value of the purchase. Therefore, according to the existing research, consumers engage into two different scenarios of shopping journey when they purchase sport shoes.

One scenario shows that consumers use a single channel during their shopping journey: they start search offline, at physical stores, they evaluate a few items at a couple of stores and they complete the purchase in-store. The findings from the study show that going in-store is an experience fulfilled by the access to touch and try the products, but also to talk to the store personnel about the interest for different items or recommendations that may suit the shopper’s needs. It is also argued that shopping for sport footwear implies personal attachment, where the level of comfort and the product features are determinants for sport
shoes purchases. According to findings to literature and commercial studies, this scenario does not fit into the showrooming model.

A second scenario presents consumers who shop across retail channels. They start their search online at retailers who have an online only or multi-channel presence. Shoppers evaluate the product still online, where they check information about its features and price. But the process of evaluation is continued offline, at different physical stores where shoppers look to obtain a confirmation of the product they choose to purchase by trying them on. Finally, the purchase is completed offline, in-store.

The second scenario is more likely to endorse showrooming across channels, which confirms the academic literature on free-riding behavior across retail channels. Consumers are determined to switch retail channels during the evaluation stage, from online to offline. Then, in-store evaluation is determined by product variety, the immediate access to try on, the service offered by staff and the instant acquisition of the item.

The speculation that mobile devices are used right at the moment of shopping, to make product comparisons and check a lower price at other retailers, is contradicted by the study. The study shows that shoppers use their mobile device as an informative tool of store proximity search.

As outlined about showrooming, sport footwear shoppers make product comparison on price and product features. But, getting the best deal, when shopping sport footwear is not as important as how suitable and comfortable the shoes are. This decision is taken during the in-store evaluation of the product. Therefore, the physical store is still a dominant channel within the shopping decision making process.

Evidence about showrooming infers that consumers are not loyal to a specific retailer or channel. Generally, shoppers will shop across channels until they find the best deal. But this is not confirmed by the sport footwear shoppers. They value the in-store experience and the helpful and knowledgeable staff that will make shoppers return to the same retailers. Moreover, these consumers feel that they would become loyal whether retailers will offer them a personalized experience, they will learn about their shopping preferences and send notifications on new arrivals, sales and promotions.

In summary, retail showrooming predominates within the sport footwear market. Consumers exhibit such behavior across online and offline retail channels. Switching retail channels at different stages during the shopping journey is related to drivers like product features and price. As much as the online search is predominant to learn about the product, browsing
online during the evaluation stage, is still an informative step which influences the channel of purchase. As most shoppers confirm that in-store experience is still detrimental for shopping sport shoes, the forecasts about the dissolution of the brick-and-mortar store is refuted.

5.2. Implications

As academic literature is limited in analyzing retail showroming, the existing research undertakes concepts from academic observations on the cross-channel behavior and the multi-channel retail environment. Whereas shopping on a single channel has been discussed at the level of the search stage, the dissertation thesis opens the discussion about shoppers and their decision making process when they shop across channels. This aspect fills an inexistent gap in the academic research.

The issue of retail loyalty has been discussed about shoppers within a multi-channel retail environment, where the retailer has online and offline presence at the same time. But, the existing study covers aspects of retail loyalty when consumers engage in a cross-channel shopping journey, when there is lack of lock-in channel at a particular moment of the shopping decision making process to keep customers engaged on the same channel of search and evaluation. Finally, the study also contributes to prove the value of the shopping experience in a physical store when shoppers are showrooming, which contradicts the debates from media about the future of the physical store.

5.3. Suggestions for Future Research

The topic of research is analyzed through data collection from surveys to consumers. But the evidence of showrooming lacks an observation research. So, future research should undertake the present study and replicate it to a sample of consumers other than students. Observation would consist of identifying consumers engaged in showrooming during the stages of the shopping decision making process. Moreover, retailers would be able to learn how to attract shoppers to keep the same channel of purchase after the evaluation stage.

Likewise, the existing research has looked into sport footwear, as a general product category. So, research could be continued to determine on which type of sport footwear showrooming is more obvious: sport, performance, active lifestyle or outdoor footwear. This could be undertaken in comparison with the non-athletic footwear market.
Finally, future research could analyze the profile of shoppers engaged in showrooiming on sport footwear purchases. This implies to use the demographics and conduct a cross tabulation by gender, age and occupation, in order to determine whether females engage in showrooming more than men or vice versa.

Alternatively, on the business side, further research should analyze the implementation of the loyalty schemes and the outcomes over retail business when their customers exhibit a free-riding behavior across multiple retail channels. This is an issue that deserves investigation to learn how retailers adapt to the changings within the retail environment.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Data on the most frequent online and offline channels shoppers will engage in showroaming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Store</th>
<th>November 2012 %</th>
<th>April 2013 %</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Buy</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walmart</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Depot</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sears</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowe's</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnes &amp; Noble</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macy's</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kohl's</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCP (JCPenney)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed Bath &amp; Beyond</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costco</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria's Secret</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Crew</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abercrombie &amp; Fitch</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various / Depends on item</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all sure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declined to answer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Responses may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
* signifies less than 1%
- signifies 0%

Table 1: Data on brick-and-mortar store that U.S. shoppers most frequently showroom at

*Source: Harris Interactive, 2013
Table 2: Online retailers that U.S. shoppers will purchase from after showrooming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>November 2012 %</th>
<th>April 2013 %</th>
<th>Showroomers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Best Buy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazon</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eBay</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walmart</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Buy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Depot</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowe's</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sears</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordstrom</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kohl's</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overstock</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macy's</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCP (JCPenney)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QVC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloomingdale's</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety / Depends on item or price</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Responses may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

* signifies less than 1%
- signifies 0%

*Source: Harris Interactive, 2013
APPENDIX 2: The influential touch points of consumer’s shopping decision process

*Source: Court et al. (2009)*
APPENDIX 3: Online Survey Questions

Q1. When I purchase sport shoes
   - I browse online
   - I read website reviews or I check social media
   - I ask friends or family for store recommendations
   - I go to the store I usually buy sport shoes
   - I visit different stores that sell sport shoes

Q2. Please select one option on the statement below
    I browse online for information on sport shoes from
    - My computer
    - Mobile phone
    - Tablet
    - I never browse online for information on sport shoes

Q3. After I learn more information about the sport shoes I want to purchase
    - I keep searching online for a store location
    - I go directly to the store I usually purchase sport shoes
    - I purchase sport shoes online
    - I search online for retailers who sell the pair of sport shoes I want at cheaper price

Q4. When selecting the store I can buy the sport shoes I want (1 = the lowest, 7 = the highest)
    I do not care to what store I buy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I care a great deal to which store I buy sport shoes

Q5. When I am in the store I usually spend searching for sport shoes
    - Less than 15 minutes
    - An average of 15 minutes
    - More than 15 minutes

Q6. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
I often feel frustrated when I fail to find what I want in the store when I purchase sport shoes. When there's a wide variety of sport shoes in-store I find hard to make a decision. I usually request in-store assistance to look for the sport shoes I want. I am uncomfortable asking store employees about location of products. I always ask the sales personnel about a recommendation. I get disappointed when I do not find the sport shoes I want. I usually ask the sales personnel about sport shoes on sale or any other promotions in store.

Q7. When I do not find the sport shoes I am looking for

- I leave the store and I go to another one
- I go home and I browse online for stores that carry the sport shoes I want
- I go home and I purchase online the pair of sport shoes I want
- I start browsing on my mobile phone while I am in-store to check what other stores might carry the sport shoes I want to purchase
- I start browsing on my mobile phone when I am out of store on other retailers that might carry the sport shoes I want

Q8. I use my mobile phone in-store to

- make product comparisons
- talk to friends or family
- to purchase
- get deals based on the location I am
- I do not use my mobile phone when shopping

Q9. Do you use any mobile app to make product / price comparison for sport shoes? Please mention which one(s)

Q10. When shopping, I make comparisons on the following channels for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical store</th>
<th>Online on PC</th>
<th>Online on mobile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product ratings or reviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deal, discounts, promotions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q11. Please rank in the order of your preferences (1 = the first and 5 = the last on the top of your preferences)

When I purchase sport shoes I usually look at the following attributes

- Price
- Design
- Brand name
- Comfortable wear
- Quality of the product

Q12. Please select one option only on the statement below

When I want to purchase sport shoes in-store, price is very important. Therefore I look for

- The lowest price
- Sport shoes on sale
- Discounts and promotions
- I buy sport shoes that I like no matter the price

Q13. Please select only one option on the statement below

I purchase sport shoes only from

- Specialty sport stores
- Department stores
- Online shoe retailers
- Small boutiques that sell sport shoes

Q14. Could you name what retail stores you purchase sport shoes from?

Q15. Please name the websites you browse online for sport shoes

Q16. What factors would influence your decision to purchase sport shoes from online retailers instead from in-store retailers? Please select only one option.

- Price
- Shipping
- Variety
- Brand name retailer
- Exclusive sport soes
- Other
Q17. I easily switch retail channels when I purchase sport shoes if

- the physical store I am in sells a similar product online
- I find the product I want at a lower price at another retail store
- I am not satisfied with the service in store
- the store doesn't carry the brand I am looking for
- it is a long distance to get to the store

Q18. Please select one of the options from the statements below:
I return to the same store to purchase sport shoes because

- staff was extremely helpful
- store has a wide selection and the latest sport shoes
- store has good price offerings for my budget
- store is very popular
- the store environment offers unique experience to its customers
- the store has unique and exclusive styles of sport shoes that I won't find anywhere else
- the store has promotions that I will not find at other retailers (online or offline retailers)

Q19. I will continue to purchase sport shoes from

- the same store I purchased initially
- the same store I always purchase
- other stores where I find better deals
- I don't know

Q20. Gender

- Male
- Female

Q21. Age

- 19 - 25 years
- 26 – 35 years
- 36 – 40 years
- 41 – 59 years
- 60 or over

Q22. Where is your location?
Q23. Employment status

- Employed
- Unemployed
- Student
- Retired
- Self-employed

Q24. If you wish to participate in an in-depth interview, please enter your e-mail address below
APPENDIX 4: Interview Questions

NAME: 
GENDER: 
AGE: 
OCCUPATION: 
COUNTRY: 

GENERAL

1. When was the last time you purchased a pair of sport footwear? And for what occasion?

2. Did you already know what type of shoes you wanted to purchase?

SEARCH

3. On what channel did you start your search for the sport shoes?

If respondent started online search:

➢ What type of device was used?

Mobile
Tablet
Laptop
PC

Continue with question #4 to link it to question #3 (if search for the product was not online continue with question #5)
4. How often do you use the device mentioned for shopping?
5. What influenced you in making the search on that particular channel?

**IN-STORE PURCHASE DECISION**

6. What is the purpose of your visit in a store?
7. When you go in-store do you already know information on the product you want to purchase? or do you learn about it on the spot at the moment of purchase?

**EVALUATION**

8. What are the attributes you looked for when you started your search?
9. Did you make comparisons of the product on different channels? Which channels?
10. What did you mostly look at during the product comparison stage? How informative was this process for you?

**PURCHASE**

11. Where did you purchase the sport footwear you decided upon?
12. What influenced your decision?

**POST-PURCHASE**

13. After purchase, how likely will you return to the same retailer? Why?
14. What would influence you to become a loyal customer to a sport footwear retailer?
APPENDIX 5: Sample answer from interview

NAME: Interviewee 3
GENDER: F
AGE: 24
OCCUPATION: Student
COUNTRY: Turkey

GENERAL

1. When was the last time you purchased a pair of sport footwear? And for what occasion?

I bought my last pair of sport shoes four months ago. I needed a pair of sport shoes because when I moved to Edinburgh I didn’t bring any pair with me. I also needed some comfortable shoes to go to the gym. But in the end I started to wear them, besides gym, outdoor too.

2. Did you already know what type of shoes you wanted to purchase?

Yes, I knew already what I wanted from the beginning. I saw this pair of pink Nike shoes online. Then I researched online on Nike’s website. I saw them there but they were pricey. Then I started to look at other retailers.
3. On what channel did you start your search for the sport shoes?

Initially I saw the picture of the Nike shoes on Instagram on my mobile phone, on a fashion blogger page. I liked them very much how it looked on her.

Then I went on Nike website and searched them. I looked at price which was too high. Then I started to search on other websites, like Zappos.com, Footlocker.com, Office.co.uk. But some of them didn’t have what I was looking for.

Then I went to a retail store in Edinburgh. I was looking for the actual Nike shop but they don’t have it here in Edinburgh. I was surprised to learn they don’t have Nike store. So I had to think where they sell sport shoes, so Footlocker was an option because they hold many brands.

If respondent started online search:

- What type of device was used?
  - Mobile
  - Tablet
  - Laptop  X
  - PC

4. How often do you use the device mentioned for shopping?

As I shop online frequently, I use my laptop very often because it is a more convenient way to search, to look at products, to find information. I don’t own a tablet so laptop is the best for me. I have a list of websites I usually browse. They are a mix of online and offline retailers, but majority they lack a physical store, they are online retailers-only.

I only check the retailers that have a physical store, for example Zara where I check online for prices, new arrivals, or just have an idea what’s in-store before I go in-store or product information. Also online I check information about stores and where I could find that particular product I am interested in.
I do not use my mobile phone for shopping. I check my mobile phone only for store information, like location, opening hours. But I don’t use it for shopping.

But if there would be a mobile application that would give me information right away on product info, stores, prices, I would use it more often. Though shopping online from my laptop is much better for me.

5. What influenced you in making the search on that particular channel? Why did u go online and not in-store first to search information for the shoes?

At the time I saw the Nike sport shoes, it was late at night. I was browsing Instagram. So once I discovered them I immediately checked online. It was more convenient search at that time/hour.

When I went online I checked the price, product reviews and the product information. I wanted to know about the purpose of the shoe, if it was a running or a tennis shoe. This actually helped to take a decision whether to buy or not the Nike shoes.

I actually always do that when I shop. I prefer to have information search. It’s very rare that I would go in-store, find something and buy it.
6. What is the purpose of your visit in a store?

It depends if I have time. I like to go in-store to look around, to see what’s new. But I prefer to search online and then go and buy in-store what I want. I don’t have time to shop for hours.

7. When you go in-store do you already know information on the product you want to purchase? or do you learn about it on the spot at the moment of purchase?

I am always prepared when I go in-store. Sometimes I don’t have enough time, so searching online is the most convenient way to learn about the product I want and then just go and purchase in-store.

EVALUATION

8. What are the attributes you looked for when you started your search?

I always look at price. Then I check the design and how the sport shoes look like. I also wanted to see how they look like because the picture on Instagram could have had a color effect and it looked different on that girl’s feet. I didn’t go for product reviews. When I looked for the Nike pair of sport shoes, I also looked at colors or features of the product. So product information is very important for me, mostly to learn what the sport shoes are used for. I wanted to know if these Nike shoes are for running or I can also wear them outdoors for a walk.
9. What did you mostly look at during the product comparison stage? How informative was this process for you?

When I did the comparison on those websites for the Nike shoes, I looked at what colors they have. Then I looked at the design and the type of shoes they have. Some had a different kind of material, like lace, or the sole was different for different types of activities.

I also looked at price. Nike online store was the most expensive, so I started to look for a cheaper price for this pair of shoes. I was looking for a sale or a discount. I get very influenced by these. I am not that kind of shopper that waits for sales or seeks sales or discounts only. If it’s an urgent need of buying something I will for some sales. If it’s a classic piece I will wait for a sale. But I don’t rely on that because it’s hard to find the size and the product you want.

I usually cannot wait for sales.

PURCHASE

10. Where did you purchase the sport footwear you decided upon?

I purchased in the end at Footlocker in-store. The shoe was on display at the window. So when I saw them I was excited to go in-store and try them on.

11. What influenced your decision?

Footlocker was the only store that had the same pair of shoes I wanted. I tried them on. I checked the price before trying them. If it was high price I wouldn’t have bought them. But I would just test to see if they are comfortable. Footlocker didn’t have this pair of shoes online so I had to go in-store to purchase them. If they would have had them online, and the price was reasonable I would have definitely purchased them online. But sometimes you have to pay for shipping. And let’s say, you are travelling or you need the shoes right away and you cannot get the product on time, ordering online is not as convenient.
12. After purchase, how likely will you return to the same retailer? Why?

I would go back to Footlocker if I need again sport apparel or shoes and they have exactly what I look for. But I cannot say I will go back from now on.

13. What would influence you to become a loyal customer to a sport footwear retailer?

I would be a loyal customer to a store if that store has a variety of product in-store I mean. But the store here in Edinburgh didn't have a wide selection. Also if they notify me on the new arrivals, on sales, I would keep checking all the time. Student discount is also important and holds a great influence on me too. Otherwise, if they gave me another discount on my next purchase, I would definitely go back. Or any other incentives or discount on items related to shoes like get a pair of socks free for the shoes you purchased.

The shopping journey of Interviewee 3:

[Diagram showing the shopping journey with nodes labeled as Mobile Consideration, Online Search, Website 1, Website 2, Website 3, Website 4, Store Purchase, and Post-Purchase: No Action]