



## An examination of consumers' cross-shopping behaviour

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### ABSTRACT

This study addresses antecedents of cross-shopping behaviour. Five theory-driven hypotheses are derived and tested. The results indicate that impulse buying tendency and perceived time pressure have a statistically significant negative effect on supermarket patronage. Product assortment and price consciousness have a statistically significant negative effect on speciality store patronage, while impulse buying tendency and convenience orientation have a statistically significant positive effect on speciality store patronage. Perceived time pressure has a statistically significant positive effect on meat store patronage. This effect is, however, not statistically significant on seafood store patronage. The findings have managerial implications for both supermarkets and speciality stores.

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### 1. Introduction

What determines the consumer's choice of food stores? Consumers patronise different food stores for a multiplicity of reasons. Certain food stores may not offer the food items they want to buy. Price and promotional campaigns may affect the choice of a specific food store. Time constraints may lead to the choice of a food store the consumers do not normally patronise. Impulse buying and convenience may also have an effect on the preferences for a particular food store. All these reasons may lead to cross-shopping behaviour characterised by the type of food stores visited and the frequency of visits. It is important for food retail managers to understand this retail patronage behaviour. Such an understanding will allow the managers to identify and target those food customers, who are most likely to patronise their food outlet. Patronage behaviour in general has been an important area of research in the retail literature. Many studies have related consumer store choice or patronage behaviour to store attributes (e.g. Fox et al., 2004); others have related patronage behaviour to the consumer's perceptions and evaluations of those attributes (e.g. Baker et al., 2002). Consumer store choice has also been related to socio-demographics (e.g. Carpenter and Moore, 2006).

However, the evolution of store formats and the resulting cross-shopping behaviour have received limited attention in the literature. Cross-shopping behaviour was first discussed in the trade literature in the late 1970s (Cort and Dominguez, 1977), but the literature has been sporadic and has focused on different

topics within the retail shopping context (Arnold et al., 1983; Urbany et al., 1996; Krider and Weinberg, 2000; Pan and Zinkhan, 2006). Examinations of studies of cross-shopping behaviour indicate that cross-shopping in general and intertype cross-shopping (i.e. crossing from a supermarket to a speciality store), in particular within the food store context, has remained largely under-analysed.

The aim of the present study is therefore to investigate antecedents of consumers' intertype food store cross-shopping behaviour. To accomplish this aim, we develop a theoretical framework that captures antecedents of consumers' format choice across three different food outlet types: supermarkets and two speciality store formats (i.e. seafood stores and meat stores). The dinner food category is an important category for most households, and consequently important for their choice of retail outlet. This study is therefore examining cross-shopping behaviour within the dinner food category. Cross-shopping behaviour should be studied and compared at the category level in order to identify predicting factors. If cross-shopping behaviour is not found within the most narrowly defined level of product hierarchy—the product category level, it is unlikely to be found across product categories. Earlier research of store patronage has also been limited to product categories such as disposable diapers (Kumar and Leone, 1988), spaghetti and cake mix (Walters, 1991), and detergents (Bucklin and Lattin, 1992).

By identifying the antecedents of food store cross-shopping behaviour, we will provide a stepping stone for understanding the nature of intertype store cross-shopping in a food retail context. This research will provide food retailers that operate various types of outlets with specific knowledge of the rationales their customers judge to be important when making format choices. As competition in the food retail industry continues to develop, a

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better understanding of the linkage between consumers and format choice is crucial to the food retailer's performance. This is of particular importance to the speciality food stores that have experienced a dramatic decline in numbers and market shares over the last couple of decades (Hansen, 2003).

## 2. Conceptual framework

Cross-shopping behaviour was defined by Cassill and Williamson (1994) as a single customer patronising multiple types of outlets, which hold the same broad merchandise lines. However, Miller et al. (1999) and Schoenbacher and Gordon (2002) defined cross-shopping behaviour as circumstances in which customers purchase goods through multiple channels run by the same retailer. If we look at cross-shopping behaviour from the retailer's perspective (Levy and Weitz, 1999; Miller et al., 1999; Hansen, 2003), two types of behaviour are identified. One type of cross-shopping behaviour can be labelled as intratype crossing. This behaviour refers to crossing between the same types of outlets (i.e. crossing from one supermarket to another supermarket). The other type of cross-shopping behaviour can be labelled as intertype crossing. This behaviour refers to crossing between different types of outlets (i.e. crossing from a supermarket to a speciality store).

Cross-shopping is a common behaviour among grocery consumers (Leszczyc and Timmermans, 1997; Carpenter and Moore, 2006). Empirical studies that scrutinise the cross-shopping behaviour from the consumer's perspective are, however, scarce. Bucklin and Lattin (1992) developed a model of product category competition among retailers. They studied the direct effect of within-category marketing activities on cross-shopping behaviour for detergents, but found no effect on the category level. Location appeared to be a better predictor of cross-shopping behaviour. Leszczyc and Timmermans (1997) described temporal aspects of cross-shopping. Based on scanner panel data from 21 grocery stores, they found substantial cross-shopping behaviour among the consumers. This behaviour was related to socio-demographics (i.e. income, education, household size) but they found only marginal effects on the crossing behaviour. Rhee and Bell (2002) studied supermarket cross-shopping behaviour. They found that nearly three quarters of the shoppers are very loyal to their supermarket. Store-specific knowledge of assortment, layout and prices were important factors hampering cross-shopping behaviour but little relationship between demographics and cross-shopping behaviour was found. Reynolds et al. (2002) examined shoppers at a traditional mall and a factory-outlet mall. The importance ratings of retail attributes were used to derive five shopper typologies in both retail formats. Fox et al. (2004) studied household shopping across three retail formats and the effect of retail marketing activities. They found that levels of assortment and promotion influenced purchases more than price. Their study also showed that shopping at other retail formats did not substitute shopping at grocery stores. Carpenter and Moore (2006) also used socio-demographics and store attributes to explain retail format choice. They used stepwise regression models to explain four individual format choices. However, only very small portions of the variation in the dependent variables could be explained (ranging from .9% for supermarkets to 9.2% for supercentres). Income, household size and education contributed significantly to explain the variation in format choice. Johnson et al. (2006) studied multi-channel shopping among rural US consumers. Multi-channel shoppers were found to be more time-pressed and dissatisfied with local offerings than other shoppers.

In summary, the literature on cross-shopping behaviour shows the sporadic nature of the empirical studies and a lack of

unequivocal findings. Neither socio-demographics nor retailers' marketing activities have provided compelling explanatory power of the cross-shopping behaviour. Because of the heterogeneous findings in the cross-shopping literature, we turned to the more general retail patronage literature in search of a comprehensive theoretical foundation for our study. However, this literature stream also shows conflicting evidence about direction and strength of predictor variables (Runyan and Droge, 2008; Pan and Zinkhan, 2006). Our study is therefore not guided by an overarching theory from where all the hypotheses are derived. As with the majority of the retail research, our study is problem based (Brown and Dant, 2006). The hypotheses are supported from more than one theory and also previous empirical findings. Based on Pan and Zinkhan (2006) analyses of retail patronage antecedents in a meta-analytical perspective, we develop a framework-capturing antecedent of cross-shopping behaviour. In their review of previous retail patronage literature and meta-analysis, determinants were categorised in three groups to identify and isolate product-relevant factors (i.e. product assortment, product quality, price), market or seller-relevant factors (i.e. convenience, service quality, store image, atmosphere), and personal factors (i.e. consumer characteristics and demographics). In our study, we include product assortment and price consciousness as product-relevant factors. Convenience is included as a market-relevant factor. Other market- or seller-relevant factors were not included since retailers' marketing activities have been shown as close to insignificant predictors of cross-shopping behaviour in previous research. So have socio-demographic variables. We therefore look beyond the existing patronage literature and include antecedents such as impulse buying and time pressure as personal factors. Those factors have not been linked to cross-shopping behaviour in previous literature. We therefore propose that impulse buying (Rook and Fisher, 1995) and time pressure (Iyer, 1989) influence cross-shopping behaviour. The shopping environment acts as an external memory aid and information source. This environment may therefore help need recognition and consequently impulse buying. However, only a finite amount of information can be processed in a given time period, implying that time pressure will become a critical factor in cross-shopping behaviour. In general, we theorise that the discussed antecedents significantly affect the frequency of visits to different store formats for shopping for the same product category.

### 2.1. Product assortment

Product assortment contributes significantly to the explanation of patronage of alternative retail channels (Arnold et al., 1983; Louviere and Gaeth, 1987; Koelemeijer and Oppewal, 1999). This major retailer attribute is described by breadth (number of brands/products) and depth (number of stock-keeping units) of an assortment offered by a retailer. The product assortment helps retailers cater to the heterogeneous tastes of their patrons (Dhar et al., 2001; Morales et al., 2005). Greater variety helps a retailer to attract more consumers, and also to persuade them to make purchases while in the store. Retailers that offer larger variety in product categories improve shopping convenience, make it easier to minimise costs (e.g. travel time, effort) associated with a shopping trip and alleviate the shopping task (e.g. by increasing comparison shopping) (Dellaert et al., 1998). Based on the fact that supermarkets' product assortment is both broader and deeper compared with speciality stores, we hypothesise:

**H1.** (a) The consumer's perceived importance of product assortment is positively related to shopping frequency in supermarkets,

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