Oliver Emrich receives William R. Davidson Award for a publication in the field of retail research

Award-winning article addresses how purchasing behavior is influenced by new technologies, identifying five different customer journey segments / Physical stores have not lost their appeal

Oliver Emrich, Professor of Management and Social Media at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU), has been awarded the prestigious William R. Davidson Award for a publication in the field of retail research. The article was written together with Professor Dennis Herhausen, Dr. Kristina Kleinlercher, Professor Peter Verhoef, and Professor Thomas Rudolph. Entitled “Loyalty Formation for Different Customer Journey Segments”, it has been acknowledged as the best contribution to the Journal of Retailing, a leading periodical in the field, in 2019. The authors investigated the impact of technological change on consumer behavior and identified five customer segments, which differ from one another in terms of how individuals search and purchase products.

Customer segments have remained unchanged for several years

"Nowadays, new touchpoints such as online shops, search engines, and social media offer customers more opportunities to design their own shopping trip, from the initial search through to the purchase", outlined Professor Oliver Emrich the starting point of the study. The study highlights how consumers design their customer journey, i.e., their purchasing activities using a variety of information and purchasing channels. The authors identified five groups of consumers on the basis of field data obtained in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria: store-focused shoppers, pragmatic online shoppers, extensive online shoppers, multiple touchpoint shoppers using a range of different touchpoints, and online-to-offline shoppers, who find information online and then make their purchase in physical stores.

These five segments differ in terms of the selection of the touchpoints they use and their general search and purchasing behavior. These segments can be described in terms of their socio-demographic and psychographic characteristics. The researchers monitored purchasing behavior at two points in time in 2013 and 2016, recording around 2,500 shopping trips on each occasion. The study showed that the segments have remained stable over the years and continue to remain resilient in the face of new technologies.

Shopping in physical stores still attractive despite availability of mobile technologies

"It was particularly notable that retail in physical stores continues to play a significant role in three of the five segments, and that mobile technologies have not replaced other touchpoints but rather supplement the customer journey", stated Emrich in summarizing the research results. Mobile use in retail is gaining ground in one of the customer segments, in which the use of smartphones during the customer journey has increased more than tenfold over a period of three years.
The study also looked at how businesses can best target the various customer segments and generate customer loyalty in times of extensive access to information and a wide range of options. Depending on customer segment, differing factors of the customer experience play the main role when it comes to appealing to potential customers. The findings of the study should help businesses develop strategies for different customer journeys and thus effectively tackle the challenges faced by the retail trade.

Internationally recognized award for publication in the field of retail research

Professor Oliver Emrich studied Business Administration at the University of Cologne and started his PhD on the subject of Cross-Channel Management at the University of St. Gallen in 2007. After completing his dissertation in 2011, he was a visiting scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, USA. Before being appointed Professor of Management and Social Media at JGU, he was Assistant Professor of Distribution Management and E-Commerce at the University of St. Gallen.

The William R. Davidson Award is awarded every year to the best article in the Journal of Retailing, a leading international journal for the retail trade that, in its own words, "is devoted to advancing the state of knowledge and its application with respect to all aspects of retailing, its management, evolution, and current theory." The award winners are selected following a vote among the members of the magazine’s panel of experts and the associated publishers. The award ceremony is scheduled to take place during the Summer Academic Conference hosted by the American Marketing Association (AMA) from August 21 to 23, 2020 in San Francisco. However, in the light of the coronavirus pandemic it is currently unclear whether the ceremony will go ahead as planned.

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