

Situationism, Dividualists, Multi-Modal Shoppers

IN RECENT YEARS ONE PHENOMENON has increasingly started to characterize modern consumers. In the UK and US it is referred to as Multi-Modal Shoppers to describe the fact that consumers find themselves in a variety of modes while shopping. In one situation they will follow a particular mood or mode, while, perhaps a few moments later, they will follow another. Maureen Johnson, CEO of The Store, employs the concept to describe how the same person relates to many different types of products and shops and will not confine him- or herself to a particular life style segment.

In Sweden, Kairos Futures employ the concept of dividualists. The individual person divides and follows different paths in their role as an everyday shopper. In Denmark the same meaning is attributed to the concept of situationism and situational consumption.

A lack of need does not prevent shopping and much less the desire to make new purchases. Consumers are happy to go shopping without a definite idea of what to really buy. This is at the very core of the future shopping culture, already evident in the current development – to find something that you are not necessarily looking for. Other studies point in the same direction. A great deal of consumption can no longer be explained by needs, segments or other traditional factors. As Fremforsk has documented in an investigation from the beginning of 2006, the degree of randomness is dependent upon age (*Forbrugeradfærd*,

Fremforsk & SP3, 2006). The younger you are, the more the consumption will be situationally determined. Hence, situational consumption will increase markedly over the next 10 years, because far more situational shoppers, particularly within Generation Y, Generation Z and later also within Generation New Millennium, grow up with this phenomenon and they will constitute the large consumption groups in 10 years. Moreover, Generation X and Generation Jones will also be affected by the phenomenon; particularly Generation Jones, because they will have more time and money to make desire-based purchases.

Multi-Modal or situational shopping is often perceived as an inexplicable aspect of consumption, but the inexplicable part can, however, be explained. It simply requires a different analytical angle: Taking point of departure in the fact that the impulse to shop is released on a specific day in a given context, and it is this situation that determines the consumption. This means that a number of situational factors will determine the purchase: The place, the time, the weather, the mood, pace or lack thereof, the context and who you are with. All of these elements are part of the *situation*. Situationism is the definition of situational consumption. The individual consumer is struck by the impulse in a given situation and therefore buys the item or service.

EXAMPLES OF SITUATIONS

- A. The first day of spring at the DIY store, birds are singing and the sun is shining - a Weber barbecue looks tempting along with a new lawn tractor.
- B. You run into an old acquaintance outside a coffee shop and end up having a beer or coffee together.
- C. In the holiday spirit at the airport with 50 minutes left before departure - the family is together - they feel like random consumption - clothes, music, books, camera, mp3 player - and also designer goods - it is all tempting.
- D. Going to the shopping center on a Sunday in February with a single item on the shopping list - basically anything might be tempting, gear for the winter vacationing, spring goods and wine for tonight's dinner.
- E. Four teenage girls are shopping on a Thursday afternoon. Temptation is a pleasure in its own right - a few items end up in the shopping bag.

DIMENSIONS OF SITUATIONS

Let us have a closer look at the dimensions of the situation:

Location: Where is the consumer, how is the location designed: pedestrian streets, shopping centers, airports, holiday destinations, online shopping. The location sets the fundamental mood.

Time: Time of the day and day of the week. Mornings invite entirely different temptations than the lunch hour. A night of culture evokes a whole other atmosphere, simply because of the time of the day. Mondays are very different from Fridays or the weekend.

Season: Summer, winter, spring and fall as well as the different months of each season. Try selling Christmas trees in May or gardening tools in December. The change of seasons affects the consumers' changing desires and needs.

Weather: Umbrellas do not sell on a sunny day. Weber barbecue grills and garden furniture do not sell when it rains. The weather is instrumental in determining the mood for desire-based consumption. We, as consumers, will almost automatically go for temptations that are continuous of the type of weather, so as to maximize our use of the items.

Mood: A difficult factor to handle, but the ambiance a shopping area creates and the events that influence the individual consumer creates a certain mood. Sometimes major events can create a collective mood, at other times the individual person's mood is determining. The ambiance and mood can be affected, demonstrated by for instance the cultural parts of a night of culture. The individual store can obviously affect the mood among customers through music, light, and smells.

Pace or lack thereof: An area characterized by an atmosphere of hustle and bustle has an entirely different effect on potential purchases than an area characterized by a peaceful and relaxing atmosphere. The individual customer experience depends on the pace of the situation, with both the individual's point of departure and destination playing a significant role for the pace.

Context: Where is the customer coming from and where are they going to? There is a big difference between 100 people departing a train on their way home and 100 people departing from buses as part of a Baltic cruise. Situationism means that a great deal of consumption is very dependent on the context in which the customer enters the store.

Who you are with: Is the customer on his or her own, together with his or her partner, with a group of friends, colleagues, business connections or as a member of an organized travel group. This makes a big difference for the impulse to buy. In this regard future youths will increasingly make the retailers' hair turn grey, because a girl of 17 by herself in a store will often bring ten girlfriends with her via text messaging.



SITUATIONISM SCENE 1

A Scandinavian family is having breakfast on a Saturday morning. They are discussing where they will be doing their Saturday shopping. She wants to do something about the bedroom, while he suggests a new chair for the living room. They also need a small carpet for the hall way, and it would be nice if she could get him started on filling up the cracks and paint the basement. They end up driving to an interior design store and a DIY store, but instead they go to IKEA, which is on the way. They come home with a new bed for one of their children, kitchen equipment, wooden toys for the kids and a swing for the garden. Now all that is taken care of!

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SITUATIONISM IN 8-10 YEARS

- The tempting, surprising and random must be given priority in the future shopping arenas.
- Several formats in the stores of the future – the same customer may be tempted by many different impulses, so a new format can be a new parameter of attraction. Maureen Johnson, *The Store: Format Frenzy: Planned, immediate, social, expert promo/value* (see also the chapter on *The Future Stores*).
- A flexible structure of the shopping area is a necessity. You have to adapt to new situations and staging. The stable and static will be old fashioned.
- Shopping areas will assume the qualities of a stage – a theater where the setting changes throughout the day, week and month.
- Adding the six different generations, many areas will change so that for example a big shopping center will contain settings for Generation Y and Z, and selected areas for Generation Jones to be tempted and go to exhibitions and where offers will change, and perhaps a more traditionalistic corner that does not change as fast for the Baby Boomer seniors.
- The transient quality of the needs means that the internet, in its future form as it will look in 8-10 years, will be a significant competitor to the shopping centers and city centers. The transient and tempting may be the core of the future web. It is incredibly easy to adapt in such a media and nothing needs to be moved physically.
- Consequently, integrating the web based transient quality will be a central parameter of survival 8-10 years from now. In 10 years it has to work in relation to the younger generations – everyone under the age of 50.