Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services 21 (2014) 258–267

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jretconser

Shopping for fun or shopping to buy: Is it different online and offline?

Daniele Scarpi*, Gabriele Pizzi, Marco Visentin

Department of Management, University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 30 August 2013
Received in revised form
13 February 2014
Accepted 13 February 2014
Available online 2 March 2014

Keywords:
Experiential
Utilitarian
Word-of-mouth
Online
Offline

ABSTRACT

Consumers can shop both online and offline, either for fun or for needs. We investigate the consequences of shopping for fun or for need on word-of-mouth (WOM), intentional loyalty, and price consciousness directly comparing the offline and online settings. We find differences in the relationships among the considered variables, with the offline context being characterized by a simplified structure of causalities, greater maturity, and fewer but stronger ties among the considered constructs, compared with the online context. Furthermore, the content of WOM changes: consumers share experiential issues when they shop for fun, and efficiency issues when their shopping is goal-oriented

1. Introduction

The role of emotions, fun, and pleasure in consumer behavior is now widely recognized as being of key importance, and consumers' shopping is usually discussed in terms of its "goal-oriented" or "utilitarian" value and its "recreational" or "hedonic" value (Griffin et al., 2000; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Wagner and Rudolph, 2010). Hedonistic shopping is described as the festive, ludic, or even epicurean way of shopping, and is related to fun and playfulness rather than to task completion, reflecting the experiential side of shopping, comprising pleasure, curiosity, fantasy, escapism, and fun (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Scarpi, 2012). On the other hand, utilitarianism is described as the ergic, task-related, and rational, meaning that a shopping expedition is based on efficiency and rationality. Utilitarianism is related to necessity rather than to recreation, and is often described in terms that are commonly used otherwise to evaluate work performance (e.g. success, accomplishment). As Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2001) p. 34 summarize, consumers can sometimes "shop to acquire items" and at other times "shop to shop".

A great deal of previous literature has debated whether the Internet is more suited to evoking goal-oriented shopping (e.g. by minimizing the time for browsing, saving preferences, and comparing products), or to evoking fun-oriented shopping (e.g. through aesthetic formality and aesthetic appeal, website design, and features of virtual reality), or whether enhancing the experiential side of shopping can harm the goal-oriented side (Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2001), rather than investigating the *consequences* of shopping for fun or for needs. Accordingly, the extant literature has reached a good knowledge on the influence of shopping orientation on channel choice, and on the parallel use of multiple channels to satisfy different types of need (e.g. information search on Internet webpages or social networks, and actual purchases in offline brick-and-mortar stores). However, less is known about the behavioral differences that might be displayed by customers once they have chosen which channel to use for their shopping purposes. The relatively small number of analyses that have focused on the different consequences of shopping orientation have usually investigated the effects on consumer satisfaction and purchase intention on potential buyers. Therefore, the present analysis adds to this latter stream of research and constitutes an advancement for four reasons. First, we assess the consequences of shopping for fun or for needs on two distribution channels simultaneously, directly comparing the online and the offline settings for fashion stores in the clothing category. To the best of our knowledge, backed by an extensive literature review as can in part be found summarized in Hoffman and Novak (2009) and Scarpi (2012), no previous study directly compared the effects of hedonism and utilitarianism online and offline: previous studies focused on one channel, and cross-channel comparisons have instead assessed features that facilitate shopping in a goal-oriented or experiential way (e.g. Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2001)), not their effects. The lack of a direct comparison between the two channels does not permit to rule out the possibility of a self-selection mechanism in channel choice as a function of consumers' shopping orientation. By providing a direct

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +39 51 2098087; fax: +39 51 246411.
E-mail addresses: daniele.scarpi@unibo.it (D. Scarpi), gabriele.pizzi@unibo.it (G. Pizzi), marco.visentin@unibo.it (M. Visentin).

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2014.02.007
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comparison of the online and the offline channels, this article aims to understand whether and to what extent consumers display different levels of hedonism and utilitarianism when shopping in these different channels and to assess the behavioral consequences of shopping orientation in the two channels.

Second, as observed by Scarpi (2012), the consequences of shopping orientation online and/or offline have either been neglected by previous works or have been considered separately, with different studies considering only one of them at a time, not their relationship or focusing on the antecedents of channel choice (such as demographics, channel knowledge, perceived channel utility, channel risk perceptions, price search intentions, or search effort). In the current article, we propose an articulated model aimed at assessing and comparing the behavioral consequences of shopping orientation between the two channels, and that specifically focuses on variables of key managerial relevance (loyalty, word of mouth [WOM] referral intention, price consciousness). We are not neglecting that there are relevant differences between the two channels that determine a different proclivity by the customers to use one of them thus exhibiting different shopping orientations; rather, we complement this stream of literature by observing the behavioral outcomes of shopping orientation online and offline.

Third, we compare not only the total amount but also the specific content of the WOM by those who shop to satisfy a goal and those who shop experientially. Finally, we do not investigate the self-reported intention to buy by respondents in a simulated setting; instead, we base the empirical analysis on actual buyers in natural settings for fast fashion stores, both offline and online.

In summary, our investigation is novel in that the literature on shopping orientation has yet to provide rewarding indications of the direction of the moderation effect played by the Internet, has focused on only one channel at a time, and has sometimes provided contradictory findings (e.g. Watchravesringkan et al. (2010) found offline that utilitarianism leads to purchase intention more than hedonism does, whereas Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2002) found the opposite online).

In the following paragraphs, we review the relevant literature and build on it to suggest a framework that binds together some of the (sometimes contradictory) evidence provided by the extant literature. Then, we present the results and discuss their theoretical and managerial implications.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

2.1. Shopping for fun, shopping for needs, and price consciousness

Consumers have been shown to display different degrees of willingness to spend time and effort shopping around if they need to purchase something at a lower price. Price consciousness refers to the extent to which a consumer uses price information as the main cue in purchasing (Lichtenstein et al., 1993). In line with previous works, price consciousness can be either high (when consumers reflect a strong concern for and attention to the price paid), or low (when consumers display a low reliance on price and do not focus primarily on price).

Because price can be a source of emotional as well as functional value, consumers may display different reactions to price depending on the hedonic or utilitarian value associated with the shopping experience (Jin et al., 2003). Consumers experience utilitarian value when they think of shopping mainly as work, that is, when their main goal is efficiency: to purchase the right product at a deal price in a short time (Babin et al., 1994; Childers et al., 2001). In other words, shopping satisfies functional needs for these consumers, and – accordingly – their price consciousness will be influenced by the extent to which they consider the prices imposed by the retailer to be aligned with an efficiency criterion. Shopping for needs has been suggested to be about buying at the lowest price possible (Lichtenstein et al., 1993; Wagner and Rudolph, 2010). As a consequence, we expect that customers with a stronger utilitarian approach to shopping will be more willing to dedicate effort to seek lower prices. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

H1a. Utilitarianism will positively affect price consciousness.

At the same time, price can be a source of emotional benefits for those consumers who associate price with more hedonic values such as prestige and higher aesthetic value (Lichtenstein et al., 1993; Neeley et al., 2010), and also for those consumers who enjoy bargaining and looking for deals not for the sake of saving money or for a more efficient money allocation, but because they like the emotion of deal-hunting and enjoy spending time shopping (Griffin et al., 2000). Previous studies have found that when shopping for fun, consumers take pride in paying low prices as a result of their superior bargaining abilities (Babin et al., 1994) that in turn can elicit positive emotions about feeling smart (Babin et al., 1994). Thus, also experiential shopping has been found to be positively related to paying attention to price levels (Scherhorn et al., 1990) and transaction-related costs (Lee and Murphy, 2009); to cherry-picking products, and to hunting for bargains (Griffin et al., 2000). In line with these considerations, we expect a positive relationship between price consciousness and hedonism. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

H1b. Hedonism will positively affect price consciousness.

In summary, in H1a in H1b we expect a positive relationship between both kinds of shopping orientations and price consciousness, although for different reasons (i.e. consumers being price conscious for efficiency reasons vs. for the emotion of deal-hunting). If price consciousness were related to only one specific shopping orientation (e.g. utilitarianism), then we would see mostly utilitarianism online and very little hedonism. Instead, several noticeable hedonic approaches to the Internet have been observed by recent studies (Hung et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2010; Scarpi, 2012). This is to say, price consciousness is not specifically related to shopping for fun or for needs.

With regard to the comparison of the offline and online channels, we expect that the distribution channel moderates the relationship between shopping orientation and price consciousness. Previous research has highlighted that the online channel makes it easier for consumers to compare prices across retailers (Grewal et al., 2010). As a consequence, one might expect that higher price consciousness could be observed in the online than in the offline context. In other words, we expect the relationship between hedonism/utilitarianism and price consciousness to be stronger online than offline.

Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

H1c. The relationship between hedonism and price consciousness will be weaker offline than online.

H1d. The relationship between utilitarianism and price consciousness will be weaker offline than online.

2.2. Shopping for fun, shopping for needs, and intentional loyalty

Loyalty can be separated into a behavioral and an attitudinal dimension (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Intentional loyalty happens when attitudinal loyalty is accompanied by the intent to take a positive action in the near future, typically to visit a store again or to re-purchase a brand.

Previous works overall support the notion that utilitarian or hedonic evaluations can affect customers' intentional loyalty (Stoel et al., 2004). Consumers have been shown to be more likely to make the same purchase in the future as a consequence of past successes at acquiring information, which in turn provides superior utilitarian shopping value (Jones et al., 2006). Consumers might also become more experienced and thus more efficient thanks to the previous purchases, for instance knowing which shelf the merchandise is on, or at what times the lines at the cashiers are shorter. Hence, we expect that shopping just to acquire items, in a utilitarian way, should lead to stronger intentional loyalty:

H2a. Utilitarianism will positively affect consumers' intentional loyalty.

Instead, mixed findings emerge with regard to the intentional loyalty of customers shopping for fun. On the one hand, consumers have been found to be more likely to switch when the level of hedonism is higher (Sloot and Verhoef, 2008). And given that shopping for fun is positively related to the desire to explore, to change, and to try novelties (Hartman and Samra, 2008; Hung et al., 2010), one could argue that when consumers shop hedonically, they might be less likely to shop at the same store again and again. Other studies, however, suggest a positive effect of hedonism on the intentional loyalty toward the retailer, as stronger intentional loyalty can be associated with higher levels of enjoyment (Chiu et al., 2010), higher interaction with the store's atmospheric facets (Slåtten et al., 2009), and greater attention to the store's experiential attributes (Nguyen et al., 2007). Previous studies in the offline context have also emphasized the difficulty of finding a store that suits one's desires for escapism and fantasy; thus, consumers might tend to shop repeatedly in the same store in order to exploit its hedonic potential (Scarpi, 2006; Van Trijp et al., 1996). Similarly, other studies set online found that successful aesthetic experiences can increase loyalty (Jeong et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2010).

Indeed, when consumers shop hedonically, they derive pleasure from purchasing different products for the sake of variety (Babin et al., 1994), but we suggest that this does not necessarily imply that they need to switch to a different store, as consumers could seek variety in brands and products and therefore remain loyal to those retailers who satisfy their need for variety (e.g. through frequent changes in stock). Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

H2b. Hedonism will positively affect consumers' intentional loyalty.

Taken together, hypotheses H2a and H2b posit that both shopping for needs and shopping for fun can positively influence intentional loyalty, although for different reasons: increased efficiency when shopping for needs, exploitation of the hedonic potential when shopping for fun. The choice of whether to increase the utilitarian or the hedonic potential of the shopping environment would therefore appear to be one of strategy and positioning.

With regard to the offline–online comparison, there appears to be no support in the extant literature to hypothesize a specific moderation effect of the distribution channel, as the literature has mostly investigated the drivers rather than the consequences of shopping for fun or for needs. Some noticeable exceptions are Jones et al. (2006) and Overby and Lee (2006), who found a positive relationship between goal-driven shopping and the intention to be loyal to a website, and also by Jeong et al. (2009), who found a positive relationship between hedonism and intentional loyalty. Nonetheless, no single previous study has directly compared the offline and online settings in order to assess the relative strengths of the relationships. To fill this gap, we compare the relationship between shopping orientation and intentional loyalty across channels. Because we find no support in the literature to hypothesize a difference in strength, neither between the two channels, nor between the two orientations, we hypothesize the following:

H2c. The relationship between hedonism and intentional loyalty is the same online and offline.

H2d. The relationship between utilitarianism and intentional loyalty is the same online and offline.

2.3. Shopping for fun, shopping for needs, and word of mouth

WOM communication has been widely studied in the marketing literature as an outcome of the purchase situation and can be defined as informal communication between customers about a product/service that can take the form of customer reviews or recommendations (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Most of the studies on WOM have focused on its transactional antecedents (Mayzlin, 2006), its psychological antecedents (Sundaram et al., 1998), and its consequences (Dellarocas, 2003). Among the studies focusing on the psychological factors affecting WOM-referral behavior (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), very few have addressed how shopping orientation influences customers' intention to engage in WOM activities. However, when consumers experience a shopping environment, they acquire personal information about the retailer, grounded in the emotional and functional outcomes of the shopping experience (Paridon et al., 2006). Regardless of its specific content, such information about the retailer is passed along to other consumers in the form of WOM (Titus and Everett, 1995).

The motivation to engage in WOM can be derived from utilitarian motives, such as consumption utility, as well as from hedonic motives, such as the desire to express feelings (Jeong et al., 2009). When consumers shop experientially, they are more concerned with involvement, positive sociality, and surprise (Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2001), whereas when consumers shop to fulfill goals they are more likely to emphasize task-oriented activities and goal-relevant information (Hoffman and Novak, 2009).

Accordingly, we hypothesize that both shopping for needs and shopping for fun could lead to WOM, although the content of what is shared with other consumers might be different. In particular, we further posit that consumers shopping in a functional way, just to acquire items, might be more likely to communicate by WOM the outcomes of the transaction and the efficiency of the retailer. On the other hand, consumers shopping for fun, just for the sake of shopping, might be more likely to produce WOM about the fun and pleasure derived from the purchase experience with the retailer. In other words, we posit that the difference in WOM due to shopping orientation may be in its content, rather than its amount.

Accordingly, we posit the following:

H3a. Utilitarianism will positively affect customers' intention to spread WOM information.

H3b. Hedonism will positively affect customers' intention to spread WOM information.

H3c. The WOM by consumers shopping in a utilitarian way focuses on efficiency issues.

H3d. The WOM by consumers shopping in a hedonic way focuses on experiential issues.

In comparison with traditional personal WOM communication, the Internet makes it easier to pass consumption-related information to other customers (Dellarocas, 2003), because it is bidirectional,

more interactive (Mayzlin, 2006), and more capillary as a result of its one-to-many form (Phelps et al., 2004). Interpersonal communication has drastically improved with the introduction of the Internet. Some of its features enhance the utilitarian aspects of WOM, as WOM referral online can be done 24/7 and is more efficient in that it allows individuals to write and read at their own pace and to report more logical and technical information than common oral communication permits (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Griffin et al., 2000). On the other hand, other features of the Internet enhance the hedonic side of WOM, providing a unique kind of interactive engagement that is pleasurable and social-interactive (Calder et al., 2009) and allowing consumers also to pursue personal self-esteem through opinion leadership (LaRose et al., 2005).

Accordingly, we posit that customers shopping for needs and shopping for fun will engage in WOM more online than offline, although for different reasons:

H3e. Hedonic shopping will make consumers engage in more WOM online than offline.

H3f. Utilitarian shopping will make consumers engage in more WOM online than offline.

2.4. Price consciousness, word of mouth, and intentional loyalty

Few empirical studies have deepened the relationship between price consciousness and intentional measures such as intentional loyalty and WOM referral, Keaveney (1995) and Xia (2010) suggest that high price consciousness has a negative impact on intentional loyalty.

Previous literature has suggested that high price consciousness tends to be more salient than low price consciousness in shaping consumers' intentional loyalty and WOM referral, and could produce stronger reactions (Mittal et al., 1998; Varki and Colgate, 2001). This evidence is in line with the Prospect Theory, that posits that losses loom larger than gains (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979). Pricing issues are more relevant to the judgment of consumers with high rather than low price consciousness. Thereby, consumers with high price consciousness could have higher perceptions of loss than consumers with low price consciousness. In this vein, high price consciousness should produce stronger reactions than low price consciousness.

As a consequence, customers with high price consciousness could be tempted to switch retailer driven by price comparisons rather than by further considerations. Furthermore, customers with high price consciousness finding a retailer that provides significantly different prices than expected could be more motivated to spread WOM than customers that are less sensitive to pricing issues. For instance, a highly price conscious customer that finds much lower/higher prices than expected, could be more likely to spread positive/negative WOM than a less price conscious customer. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

H4a. Price consciousness has a negative impact on customers' intentional loyalty.

H5a. Price consciousness has a positive impact on customers' intention to spread WOM about a retailer.

As we compare online and offline shopping contexts, in this study we also speculate about the moderating role of the distribution channel on the consequences of price consciousness. In this regard, we expect that price consciousness will have a stronger influence on customers' intentional loyalty and WOM-referral behavior in the online than in the offline context. In fact, only for online customers is it concretely possible to easily switch retailers without barriers or delays, and to easily communicate to millions. Thus, consumers online could find lower prices with less effort and communicate this information to more people.

One could also argue that, when shopping on the Internet, consumers cannot physically handle the product, which leads them to be unsure that what is represented on the Web is consistent with what will be actually received (Jiang and Rosenbloom, 2005). In conditions characterized by such uncertainty, price consciousness may play an increased role in determining the intention to return (Liu and Arnett, 2000). In other words, consumers may be more willing to seek lower prices and to shop at more than one retailer in order to take advantage of low prices. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

H4b. Price consciousness leads to less intentional loyalty online than offline.

H5b. Price consciousness leads to more WOM communication online than offline.

2.5. The theoretical model

Based on the considerations developed in the theoretical framework, we advance the model depicted in Fig. 1 to test our hypotheses.

First we ran the model on data for the online and the offline channels simultaneously (i.e. the "full model" procedure), as detailed in the Full model estimation paragraph. This allowed us to test hypotheses H1a, H1b, H2a, H2b, H3a, H3b, H4a, and H5a. Next, we ran the model on the two channels separately (i.e. the "stacked model" procedure), to compare parameter estimates online and offline. This allowed us to test hypotheses H1c, H1d, H2c, H2d, H3e, H3f, H4b, and H5b. Finally, we compared the WOM content by consumers shopping in a utilitarian versus hedonic way to test H3c and H3d.

The literature has already documented the possibility of a relationship between loyalty and WOM, both offline and online (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Gruen et al., 2006; Wangenheim and Bayón, 2004). Accordingly, the path is considered in the model, but no specific hypotheses are developed because they would provide no new evidence. Instead, it might provide more insightful for the goals of our research to compare the direct path (hedonism/utilitarianism → WOM) with the indirect path mediated by loyalty (hedonism/utilitarianism → loyalty → WOM).

Virtually every previous study about shopping orientation has considered the construct of satisfaction, both theoretically and empirically. The literature has already clearly assessed that "both the utilitarian and the hedonic value obtained from a shopping experience should relate to consumer satisfaction" (Babin et al., 1994, p.652), as "the experiential aspects of online shopping can be enhanced without interfering with the goal-oriented desires of consumers" (Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2001, p.34). Thus, satisfaction was not formally included in the model. Accordingly, we investigated satisfaction separately, as for instance in Babin et al. (1994), to test whether our findings are aligned with the existent body of evidence.

3. Method

3.1. Model estimation

Structural equation models (SEMs) allow us to capture the interactions among the constructs considered, and to quantify the impact of shopping for fun or for needs on intentional loyalty and on WOM. We estimated the model illustrated in Fig. 1 using LISREL 8.80.

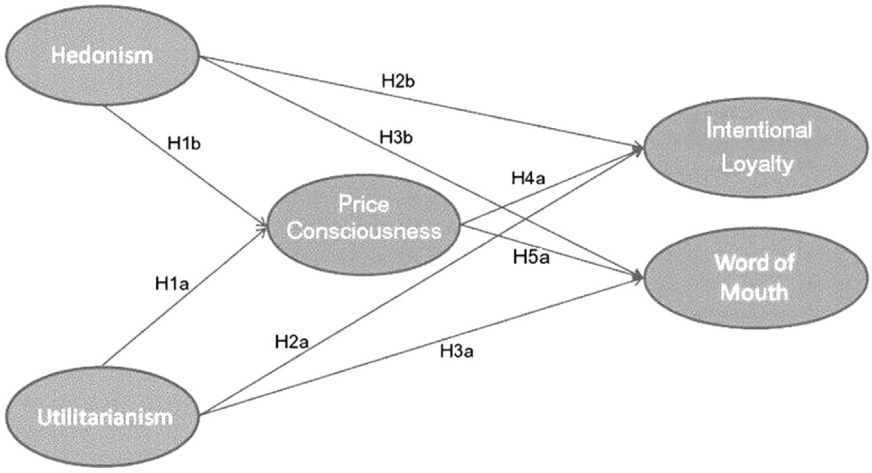

Fig. 1. The theoretical model.

The model proposes price consciousness as a mediator of the effects of hedonism and utilitarianism on intentional loyalty and on WOM. The significance of the paths was tested based on their *t*-values. Mediation has been tested in line with the assessment of mediating effects in SEMs, by investigating whether the indirect paths are significant while the direct link is not (Baron and Kenny, 1986; Iacobucci, 2008).

The data collected are scores on a scale (as detailed in the following paragraph); thus they are neither continuous nor multinormally distributed. Accordingly, the SEM has been estimated using the polychoric correlation matrix, as Pearson correlation could provide biased results (Jöreskog and Sörbrom, 2003). We used weighted least squares as an estimation technique, because they do not require *a priori* hypotheses about the distribution of data and are robust in case of violation of multivariate normality (Iacobucci, 2008; Jöreskog and Sörbrom, 2003).

To compare consumer behaviors online and offline, we split the sample into two sub-samples. The stacked model procedure ran the same structural model simultaneously on the two different subsets. The model was run first keeping all paths invariant between groups, and then releasing each path one by one (Jöreskog and Sörbrom, 2003). This procedure allowed us to see whether, where, and how much the relationships among the constructs changed between channels.

3.2. Measurements

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire. The questions were pre-tested on a pilot sample to ensure that they were easy to understand and not ambiguous. The questionnaire comprised three parts: the first briefly introduced the questionnaire and explained that it is an independent research study conducted by a university and that the data are anonymous and will not be sold to anyone; the second contained the scales for hedonism, utilitarianism, intentional loyalty, WOM, and price consciousness; and the third registered respondents' age and gender.

Consistent with Podsakoff et al. (2003), in order to reduce evaluation apprehension and social desirability biases, we reassured respondents that there were no right or wrong answers, and we explicitly asked them to answer questions honestly. Furthermore, the order of questions was mixed. Already-existing measures were used: McMullan and Gilmore (2003) and Sirohi et al. (1998) for loyalty; Lichtenstein and colleagues (1993) for price consciousness; Price and Arnauld (1999) for WOM; Oliver (1997) for satisfaction. To measure customers' experiential- and goal-oriented shopping orientation, we referred to the offline scale by Babin et al. (1994), which was recently adapted and used in Scarpi (2012) for the online context as well.

We first administered the questionnaire to a pilot sample of 120 students using complete scales for each construct. This was done to select a parsimonious set of items for each latent construct by factor-analyzing the variables and by assessing with Cronbach's alpha the reliability of the latent constructs. The results from the pilot sample were not included in the analysis, as they served only to check and improve the scale.

The final scale exhibits excellent reliability, with pertinent factor loadings above .45, significant chi-squares, and Cronbach's alphas greater than .79 (utilitarianism: 3 items, $\alpha = .84$; hedonism: 4 items, $\alpha = .89$; intentional loyalty: 3 items, $\alpha = .88$; price consciousness: 2 items, $\alpha = .92$; WOM: 3 items, $\alpha = .93$; satisfaction: 3 items, $\alpha = .87$). We tested for discriminant validity by estimating two models: one in which the constructs were not correlated and one in which we allowed for correlation. The differences in the chi-square of the two models is significant ($p < .01$), pointing to discriminant validity (Jöreskog and Sörbrom, 2003).

To test for the different content of WOM (H3c and H3d), we further asked respondents who stated a positive intention to engage in WOM communication to briefly state what they would say to other consumers. The outcome of this short, free elicitation was then later coded into four different categories: (1) neither efficiency nor experiential-related issues, (2) efficiency-related issues), (3) experiential-related issues, and (4) both efficiency- and experiential-related issues. Three independent judges received a definition of "experiential" and "efficient" taken from Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2001) and were asked to classify accordingly the respondents' statements into one of the four classes. An inter-rater reliability analysis using the Kappa statistic was performed to determine consistency among judges (Landis and Koch, 1977).

To test whether the different content of WOM is related to the different orientations toward shopping, we compared with an ANOVA the scores on the hedonic dimension and on the utilitarian dimension for consumers who spread different kinds of WOM.

3.3. Sample

A questionnaire was administered both offline and online on different days and at different times over a 4-week period (March). No extraordinary events (new openings, significant changes in market size, or mergers and acquisitions among the market leaders, etc.) took place during that period in the sampled stores and websites.

The offline questionnaire was administered to customers who were randomly drawn from different cities (i.e. Bologna, Rimini, Milan, Padua, and Naples) and metropolitan areas of the same country (i.e. Italy) while they were queuing to pay for purchases or immediately after they left the cashiers. This allowed for a high response rate (about 10% refused the interview, similar to the percentage in Scarpi, 2012).

To avoid possible confounds in the comparison of the distribution channels and to avoid differences in cognitive processing due to different timings of the interviews, we also asked online respondents about their shopping behavior immediately after they paid for their purchases, and we selected the e-commerce websites provided by the same offline retailers. Immediately after completing the checkout procedure, respondents received a pop-up invitation to complete a questionnaire. The invitation contained a link, and customers agreeing to participate in the survey clicked on the link and were redirected to a webpage with the questionnaire. About 75% of the contacted customers agreed to answer the questionnaire, and less than 1% of these failed to complete and submit it. The software also tracked the respondents' Internet protocol (IP) addresses in order to keep the same person from answering twice (e.g. in case she or he had more than one browser window open).

Respondents offline and online also received the same invitation message, which briefly informed respondents that the survey was anonymous and that it was conducted by a leading national university, without commercial purposes.

A total usable sample of 733 questionnaires was collected, 480 offline and 253 online; 54% of the respondents were women, and their average age was 28 years (the median age was also 28 years). No significant differences emerged between the online and offline samples with regard to gender composition ($p=.694$) or mean age ($p=.536$).

3.4. Product category

The literature has found product category to be far less relevant in triggering specific orientations than originally supposed, and a plethora of previous studies have found evidence of both a hedonic and a utilitarian way of experiencing a shopping expedition in many different retail contexts, from specialty stores to supermarkets, from boutiques to computer shops (see Scarpi (2012) for a review). Nonetheless, for the purposes of comparing consumers' hedonic and utilitarian shopping behavior, fashion stores (excluding luxury boutiques) remain one of the favorite settings both offline and online (see, e.g., Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2002), Kim et al. (2010), Scarpi (2006)), because there is agreement that clothing triggers both emotional and cognitive reactions, so that consumers are able to experience the shopping expedition both in a hedonic and in a utilitarian way, and that significant volumes of clothing purchases take place online as well (Eurisko, 2011). Thus, in this analysis we consider clothing and, in line with the main stream of the literature, we exclude from the category both underwear and high-couture luxury fashion.

The considered products and brands, both online and offline, are comparable in price, brand image, and brand knowledge; have stationary market shares and wide coverage; and appeal to a broad public (Eurisko, 2011; Colucci and Scarpi, 2013). Furthermore, we asked a pilot sample of 50 individuals to list the names of the clothing shops and sites that came to mind (excluding luxury boutiques, as in Bloch (1986)). The stores and sites we selected were those ranking in the "top of the mind" position for the majority of the respondents.

4. Results

4.1. Full model estimation

Model estimation on the whole sample yields a more than satisfactory fit (CFI, IFI, NNFI=.99, NFI=.98, GFI=.97, RMSEA=.04, SMR=.03). In line with the main findings in the literature on hedonism and utilitarianism, we find the correlation between the two constructs (both exogenous latent variables) to be negative and different from zero (-0.39, $p=0.04$). Moreover, we found no differences in the level of hedonism ($F(1, 732)=1.87$, $p>.05$, $\eta^2=.003$) and utilitarianism ($F(1, 732)=3.45$, $p>.05$, $\eta^2=.005$) between males and females, in line with the findings reported by Scarpi (2012).

Parameter estimates for the full model are reported in Table 1.

As summarized in Table 1, this evidence supports H1a, H1b, H2b, H3a, H3b, H4a, and H5a but not H2a. In particular, the model documents that price consciousness has a negative impact on intentional loyalty but a positive impact on WOM. Both hedonism and utilitarianism have a positive impact on price perception. Although hedonism has a positive impact on intentional loyalty and WOM, utilitarianism exerts a positive impact on WOM, but its impact on intentional loyalty is not significant.

4.2. Stacked model estimation

In the stacked model, the sample is split on the basis of the channel used (480 observations for the offline channel and 253 for the online channel). When testing the invariance of the structural model between groups, we find no support for the invariance hypothesis (Garcia and Kandemir, 2006). Releasing the invariance constraint significantly raises the stacked model fit to more than adequate levels (SRMR=0.027/0.039; RMSEA 0.034/0.033; GFI=.97/.95; NFI=.98; NNFI=.99; CFI=.99). This evidence shows that the paths vary depending on the channel. In other words, the relationship is driven by different constructs in the two groups,

Table 1
Full model estimates.

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate (SE)	*t*-Value
H1a (confirmed)	Utilitarianism → Price consciousness	.10 (.04)	2.28
H1b (confirmed)	Hedonism → Price consciousness	.09 (.04)	2.03
H2a (disconfirmed)	Utilitarianism → Intentional loyalty	−.04 *n.s.* (.04)	−.93
H2b (confirmed)	Hedonism → Intentional loyalty	.57 (.05)	13.16
H3a (confirmed)	Utilitarianism → WOM	.16 (.04)	3.88
H3b (confirmed)	Hedonism → WOM	.38 (.05)	7.46
H4a (confirmed)	Price consciousness → Intentional loyalty	−.16 (.04)	−4.44
H5a (confirmed)	Price consciousness → WOM	.26 (.04)	6.41
–	Intentional loyalty → WOM	.08 *n.s.* (.05)	1.70

Note. n.s.=not significant; SE=standard error; WOM=word of mouth.

Table 2
Stacked model for the online and offline channels.

Hypothesis	Path	Online		Offline	
		Estimate (SE)	*t*-Value	Estimate (SE)	*t*-Value
H1c (confirmed)	Hedonism → Price consciousness	.21 (.07)	2.88	−.02 *n.s.* (.04)	−.53
H1d (confirmed)	Utilitarianism → Price consciousness	.19 (.07)	2.68	*.01 n.s. (.04)*	.19
H2c (disconfirmed)	Hedonism → Intentional loyalty	.60 (.10)	6.34	.79 (.07)	11.04
H2d (confirmed)	Utilitarianism → Intentional loyalty	−.03 *n.s.* (.08)	−.39	*−.05 n.s. (.06)*	−.83
H3e (confirmed)	Hedonism → WOM	.42 (.10)	4.29	.37 (.07)	5.11
H3f (disconfirmed)	Utilitarianism → WOM	.16 (.08)	1.99	.22 (.05)	3.94
H4b (confirmed)	Price consciousness → Intentional loyalty	−.17 (.07)	2.42	−.05 *n.s.* (.05)	−.91
H5b (confirmed)	Price consciousness → WOM	.23 (.06)	3.49	.06 *n.s.* (.06)	.99
–	Intentional loyalty → WOM	.013 *n.s.* (.07)	1.88	.03 *n.s.* (.05)	.59

Note. n.s. = not significant; SE = standard error; WOM = word of mouth.

and the same constructs have different strengths across the two channels.

Parameter estimates for the two groups (stacked model) are reported in Table 2.

We tested for significant between-channel differences in the parameter estimates between the two groups (i.e. parameter estimate for a path in the offline group vs. the estimate for the same path in the online group). The test was conducted by releasing paths one by one, in line with Iacobucci (2008), and by assessing the significance of the change in the chi-square (Garcia and Kandemir, 2006).

The significance of the differences in the chi-squared test ($p(\Delta\chi^2) < .05$, df = 2 in the Gamma matrix and df = 5 in the Beta matrix) between the online and the offline groups shows that there is a stronger relationship online than offline between Hedonism and Price consciousness (.21 vs. n.s.), Utilitarianism and Price consciousness (.19 vs. n.s.), Hedonism and WOM (.42 vs. .37), and Price consciousness and WOM (.26 vs. n.s.), and also a stronger (negative) relationship between Price consciousness and Intentional loyalty (−.17 vs. n.s.). However, there is a stronger relationship offline than online between Utilitarianism and WOM (.22 vs. .16) and between Hedonism and Intentional loyalty (.79 vs. .60). No differences emerge, however, across channels ($p(\Delta\chi^2) > .05$) in the relationships between Utilitarianism and Intentional loyalty (n.s. vs. n.s.) and between Intentional loyalty and WOM (n.s. vs. n.s.).

This evidence suggests that it would be superficial and wrong to state that increased hedonism and utilitarianism simply strengthen all other relationships (with partial mediation): we find significantly different paths for the two constructs and the two channels, with construct-specific and channel-specific relationships. Although both hedonism and utilitarianism can be enhanced by a retailer online (Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2001) as well as offline (Babin et al., 1994), the overall picture from our data shows that increasing hedonism or utilitarianism would exert different effects on customers' price perceptions, loyalty, and WOM behavior. Furthermore, our findings show that the subjective emotional component of price is as important as the tangible component.

In summary, we find that the offline group is characterized by a simplified structure of causalities, greater maturity, and fewer but stronger ties among the considered constructs compared with the online group. However, the online group is characterized by an articulated structure of causalities, which is significantly different from the offline group and from the full (i.e. unstacked) model.

4.3. Word-of-mouth content

The inter-judge reliability was found to be $K = 0.93$ ($p < .001$), pointing to an almost perfect agreement according to the interpretation of Kappa by Landis and Koch (1977).

Four percent of the content of the WOM was classified as neither efficiency- nor experiential-related, 45% as experiential-related, 40% as efficiency-related, and 11% as both efficiency and experiential-related.

The data provide support for H3c and H3d: efficiency-related WOM is spread by consumers who shop with a high degree of utilitarianism (4.03 vs. 2.30, $F = 184.1$, $p < .001$, eta-squared .51 offline; 4.01 vs. 2.31, $F = 134.5$, $p < .001$, eta-squared .47 online). Experiential-related WOM is spread by consumers who shop with a high degree of hedonism (4.25 vs. 2.45, $F = 106.0$, $p < .001$, eta-squared .37 offline; 4.11 vs. 2.51, $F = 168.6$, $p < .001$, eta-squared .53 online).

4.4. Price consciousness as mediator

The model proposes price consciousness as a mediator of the effects of hedonism and of utilitarianism on intentional loyalty and on WOM. Baron and Kenny (1986) indicate that three conditions must be met for a mediation effect to be present: (1) the exogenous variable (hedonism; utilitarianism) must affect the possible mediating variable (price consciousness); (2) the possible mediating variable (price consciousness) must affect the endogenous variable (intentional loyalty; WOM); and (3) the effect between the exogenous and endogenous variables must be close to zero. As a consequence, our data support a mediation effect for price consciousness only between utilitarianism and intentional loyalty in the full model and in the online stacked model.

The *t*-values for the significance of the parameter estimates are provided in Tables 1 and 2.

4.5. Comparison with previous analyses

Useful considerations emerge when we compare our results with those from previous studies. Previous analyses focused on one channel only (either offline or online), whereas the present analysis addresses both simultaneously. Our results are consistent with those of previous studies but allow us to add further insights and more depth to their findings with regard to the considered variables.

Nguyen et al. (2007) and Slåtten et al. (2009) found offline that shopping for fun leads to brand loyalty and to store loyalty. Along the same lines, Park and Sullivan (2009) found offline that hedonism leads to higher re-purchase intention than utilitarianism. Online, Kim et al. (2010) found that shopping for fun leads to higher re-patronage intention than shopping for needs. While all these findings are aligned with the evidence from our model, namely that loyalty is driven by hedonism, we can further add that the relationship between hedonism and loyalty is influenced by the distribution channel and is stronger offline (.79 vs..60,

$p < .001$), while the relationship with utilitarianism is unaffected by the distribution channel (n.s. vs. n.s. $p > .05$).

Jones et al. (2006) found online that shopping for fun leads to more WOM than shopping for needs. This previous evidence is in line with our results (.42 vs. .16, $p < .001$), but in light of our model we can add that this holds true offline as well (.37 vs. .22, $p < .001$), and that – overall – customers who shop for needs have a greater tendency to engage in WOM offline than online (.22 vs. .16, $p < .001$), whereas customers who shop for fun have a greater tendency to engage in WOM online than offline (.42 vs. .37, $p < .001$). Overall, consumers who shop for fun have a higher tendency to engage in WOM than customers shopping for needs, regardless of the channel (.38 vs. .16 full model, $p < .001$). Furthermore, as addressed in the Word-of-mouth content paragraph, our analysis adds that the content of WOM is different between consumers shopping hedonically and consumers shopping in a utilitarian way. When shopping for fun, consumers' WOM is about experiential-related issues; when shopping for needs, consumers' WOM is about efficiency-related issues.

Offline, Park and Sullivan (2009) found that attention to prices is the same when shopping is experiential and when it is goal-oriented, and Stoel et al. (2004) found that higher monetary expenditures do not indicate greater hedonism. Our evidence adds that this holds true online as well (.21 vs. .19, $p > .05$), and that there is a moderation effect by the distribution channel, as online the relationship between shopping orientation and price consciousness is higher than offline (.21 vs. n.s., $p < .001$;.19 vs. n.s., $p < .001$ for utilitarianism).

Finally, our findings for satisfaction are fully in line with the existent literature that attests a correlation of approximately .50 (see e.g. Babin et al. (1994)). Our data show that shopping either for fun or for needs leads to similar levels of customer satisfaction, correlations between satisfaction and hedonism, and between satisfaction and utilitarianism being respectively .49 and .52 offline, and .50 and .48 online.

4.6. Ruling out alternative explanations

4.6.1. Multi-channeling and cross effects

One might object that consumers could use both channels simultaneously and thus experience cross effects. Such alternative explanation of the results would basically deny a separation between the online and the offline contexts. However, not only were the questionnaires administered in the different channels, but we also checked for the use of both channels by the same consumers. Specifically, (1) only 3% of the respondents offline had also bought clothing online in the previous three months; and (2) more than half the respondents online had not purchased clothing offline in the previous three months (68%), and running the model separately for the 32% online consumers who also bought offline and for the 68% online consumers who bought only online showed negligible changes in the path estimates (± 0.005), with none of the significant paths becoming not significant (or vice versa). These two points also ensure that the effects are not due to the measurement instruments adopted in the online and offline channels.

4.6.2. Reverse causality

The use of SEMs basically infers causality by regressions, but this way of testing for causality requires that causality cannot be logically reversed. Reverse causation is an issue that potentially affects all analyses based on SEMs but that can be addressed in several ways. In our case, the independent variables (hedonism and utilitarianism) have often been conceptualized in the literature as individual personality traits of consumers (Scarpi, 2012; Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2001), so that it would be impossible for loyalty, price consciousness, or WOM to determine personality. In other studies hedonism and utilitarianism have instead been considered orientations that emerge during a shopping expedition and that could eventually vary from one shopping trip to the next (Griffin et al., 2000). Nonetheless, reverse causality can be again ruled out, as hedonism and utilitarianism exist during the shopping expedition, whereas WOM or intentional loyalty follow shopping. This is to say, the independent variables precede in time the dependent variable: because effects cannot precede causes, one can rule out reverse causation.

5. Discussion

The overall goal of our analysis was to investigate the role of the distribution channel in the relationship between shopping orientation and several consumers' post-purchase evaluations and behaviors, such as price consciousness, intentional loyalty, and WOM-referral intention and content. In order to accomplish this objective, we collected data in both the online and the offline settings so that our observations comprise post-purchase evaluations made by customers who purchased an item from the same product category but in the two different channels. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first attempt in the literature to directly compare the consequences of shopping orientation in terms of consumers' post-purchase behaviors between the online and the offline contexts. The extant literature has traditionally considered and analyzed the online and offline settings separately, and has linked goal-oriented utilitarian shopping and experiential hedonic shopping with many different constructs (often one at a time). As a consequence, the body of previous studies yielded mixed results and the knowledge on how hedonism and utilitarianism operate online and offline is fairly sparse. We have tried to fill this gap by implementing a comprehensive SEM that ties together hedonism and utilitarianism with their various consequences presented in the extant literature. Moreover, in comparison to the vast majority of previous studies, which were conducted by asking respondents to imagine a fictitious purchase situation, this study is based on field data of actual purchases made by real customers.

We found that the online context is characterized by a more complex pattern of causal relationships than the offline context. Offline, the way of experiencing the shopping expedition affects only customers' intentional loyalty toward the store and intent to spread WOM. On the basis of our results, we find no significant differences in price consciousness for customers who shop for fun rather than for needs. This can be explained by considering that most consumers are more familiar with traditional offline shops (E-marketer, 2011) and that the offline channel is characterized by greater maturity, so that consumers, apart from noticeable departures from their reference price, are more likely to be accustomed to the price level and to have fewer expectations of finding a lower price. We find online, however, that price consciousness is significantly affected by the way consumers experience their shopping expedition: both utilitarianism and hedonism influence price consciousness. As we hypothesized, when consumers shop for fun they enjoy deal-hunting and spending more time shopping online, whereas when consumers shop for needs they actively search for lower prices and a more efficient money allocation, especially given that price comparisons are much faster and easier online than offline. These results are relevant to marketing theory, where mixed findings have been presented on the shopping orientation–price consciousness relationship. We also find that customers shopping for fun are more likely to be loyal to a brick-and-mortar store than to an online store. This finding is in line with previous research suggesting that increasing levels of

excitement and fun can positively affect the intentional loyalty of those customers who shop hedonically (Chiu et al., 2010; Slåtten et al., 2009), and shows that although experiential shopping is strictly connected to variety, it does not preclude loyalty, as variety can be pursued in the same store across products, rather than across stores.

From a managerial perspective, these findings suggest that e-tailers should not overlook pricing issues even when they are trying to make consumers experience the browsing section hedonically. We find that shopping for fun does not imply forgetting about prices: retailers targeting fun-driven, hedonic consumers must adopt the same attention to prices they would adopt for goal-driven consumers. Furthermore, because the online channel makes it easier for consumers to compare prices across retailers, price consciousness is stronger online. In addition, some retailers might imagine that experiential shopping is related to lower store loyalty, because consumers seek variety. Instead, our evidence proves the opposite: when shopping for fun, consumers display more intention to be loyal to the store/website, thus retailers should exploit the hedonic potential of their store/website and to target variety seekers.

Our results show that both shopping for fun and shopping for needs are related to customers' intention to spread WOM communication, but that customers shopping for fun are more likely to do so. We find this tendency both online and offline, and this evidence is in line with the theoretical suggestions that WOM communication stems from consumers' involvement (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), which is more closely related to the hedonic side of the shopping experience (Hoffman and Novak, 2009). Furthermore, we find that the content of WOM is different for consumers shopping in a hedonic versus a utilitarian way: whereas the former spread WOM on experiential issues (fun, ability to fantasize in the retail environment, etc.), the latter spread WOM on more efficiency-related issues (ease of finding products, quality of the search engine, etc.). In summary, practitioners should be aware that the shopping environment (online and offline) determines the amount of WOM, whereas the shopping orientation (for fun vs. for need) determines its content.

Previous research has shown that it is possible for retailers to enhance hedonism and utilitarianism by carefully designing the features of a store or website. Our evidence about WOM combined with the results from the model leads us to conclude that hedonism and utilitarianism cannot be simply used interchangeably: the retailer must strategically choose which one to enhance.

Finally, by directly comparing the offline and online channels, we add further details to the findings of previous analyses, address the moderating role of the distribution channel on the considered variables, and put together in a larger and more coherent picture scattered pieces of previous evidence. In summary, our findings provide suggestions to retailers about how to manage consumer orientations toward shopping and show that it would be wrong to think one has just to increase either hedonism or utilitarianism: we find significantly different paths for the two constructs and the two channels, with construct-specific and channel-specific relationships that are detailed in the paper.

6. Limitations

The current study is based on data from a single product category (clothing). Although clothing is probably the most commonly considered category in this stream of research, product category might moderate the relationships investigated in this study, and has been shown to affect customers' intention to purchase (Brown et al., 2003; Girard et al., 2003).

Second, our analysis is restricted to individuals who actually made a purchase. However, the proportion of those who make a purchase out of those who visit a store might vary among the two channels, and might also vary as a function of shopping orientation.

Finally, while our findings add detail to past evidence or explain some apparent contradictions in previous findings, our model addresses only a few of the many constructs that have been considered in relationship to hedonism and utilitarianism. Future research could consider different and more constructs in order to gain a broader knowledge of the consequences of shopping orientation in the online and offline contexts.

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