The Accidental Ethnographer: a journey within the world of the supermarket

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Abstract

This paper takes into account the cultural environment of the every day lives of members in a highly developed economy, in particular the choices and complexity as reflected in the grocery shopping process. We deconstruct the ethnographic process to examine if a multifaceted approach impacted the final results. The framework included a mail survey, videography, depth interview and archival data. Each was a complete phase in itself, and the data informed requirements of the next phase as a way to add depth to understanding. The original intention was to undertake (only) structured, observational research to consider a fairly standard marketing problem – the emotional connection of shoppers to grocery brands. However we soon realized that such a format was unsatisfactory. Instead we recognized the need to consider both content and process of shopping as a way of understanding the complexities of consumer behavior reflected in shopping behaviour.

Key Words: Videography, consumer, emotions, grocery shopping, multi-method, ethnography, depth interview, archival data

Introduction

This paper takes onto account the cultural environment of every day lives of members in a highly developed economy, in particular, choices and subsequent complexity reflected in the grocery shopping process. This study examines this complexity of consumer responses and actions and with consideration of a market dominated by two major grocery retailers, which potentially have significant influence regarding these decisions. The pluralistic approach taken here allowed us to uncover the convolution of these decisions.

The ethnographic approach presented, shows a tightly designed framework of research events. This framework includes archival data, a mail survey, videography, and depth interviews. Each was a complete phase in itself, but with the data also informing the requirements of the next phase as a way to add depth to our understanding. In this paper, we deconstruct the process to examine the ways in which this design impacted upon the insights we were able to uncover. It is important to examine both the findings emerging from the design and how the interactions of the components of the design interacted to produce those results as way of making sense of both (Agar, 1990) and therefore we present insights into the consequences of our portfolio of approaches (Whyte, 1986). In particular the insights of our particular brand of ethnography as applied in this research design is considered.

We are ‘accidental ethnographers’, coming as we do from an academic discipline that neither has a strong tradition of in-depth observational research (mostly due to resource constraints) (Chamberlain and Broderick 2007) nor welcomes non positivistic methods - as evidenced by the stance of any standard market research textbook (e.g. Malhotra, 2007, Churchill et al, 2008) and methodologies reported (and not) in key journals. However this is in contrast to the practice of commercial market research where qualitative research is the norm in many instances.

The original intention was to undertake (only) structured, observational research to consider a fairly standard marketing problem – the emotional connection of shoppers to grocery brands. This would have included use of standard observables such as discrete measures of eye movements, body movements, movement through the geographic shopping space, etc., with information deficiencies overcome by use of follow up depth interviews. However we soon realized that such a format was unsatisfactory. Instead we recognized the need to consider both content and process of shopping as a way of understanding the complexities of consumer behavior reflected in such buying activities.

Traditional structured observation methods have a number of failings, in particular the lack of relevant, depth information that emerges in many instances (Hodgson et al 2007). Shopping behaviour is no exception. While simple descriptive information can be collected using quantitative methods, more substantive behaviour and their implications such as uncovering the emotive connections to brands cannot.

We do not completely discount the need for such quantitative methods and indeed use these methods in combination with qualitative enquiry. In this instance; they were applied *prior* to undertaking the ethnographic component. This approach reverses the usual juxtaposition in marketing where researchers use qualitative methods to primarily or entirely define the sample and design the questionnaire (as lamented by ethnographically oriented market researchers such as Calder, 1977).

The purpose of our approach to design was twofold. Firstly the preliminary survey was used to determine if any further recruitment to augment the mixture of participants in the observation’s sample was warranted – judgment of this was via comparison to existing work (e.g. Sheth, Newman et al., 1991, Aaker, 1996, Huang and Yu, 1999). Secondly, the survey sample provided a comprehensive source for identifying informants who were willing to participate in the ethnographic component of the research; indeed, 99 respondents indicated they were willing to be involved in the study which was more than double our expectations.

By including a preliminary survey into our method, we were able to gain insight into the shopping behaviours of a broad section of Australian households. There was the addition into the survey of a limited number of emotional indicators (Mehrabian and Russell, 1971); however while they gave a sense of emotions consumers thought they felt, these semantic differential scales only provided insights into particular types of memory, with respondents using post-action justification to interpret and report their memories (and this is fraught with difficulty as noted by Chamberlain and Broderick 2007).

Ethnography is about observation (Silvermann, 2006). But it is too limited if it is confined to observing people via real time actions. We concur that ethnography should also be a multi-lens action, where such data is also rooted in informant reflection and archival data rather than just visual data capture (Gracy, 2006). What would have emerged if we hadn't adopted this multi-lens perspective? If, for example, we had taken a solely archival research approach (in this research, six weeks of shopping dockets were collected), we would have known where consumers shop, when they buy, how much they spent and the brands they bought. But this alone, would not have answered our research question as to how they behave and why they buy in particular patterns. Observational data certainly contributes to solving this dilemma.

However observation must be effectively designed and implemented and also embedded in an appropriately ordered stream of research to realize its full potential. Often observation is not well implemented. Many prior studies use manual observations and/or are heavily participant involved (Lee & Marshall, 1998, Otnes and Lowrey, 1997). In this study these limitations were overcome via the use of videographic research as it not only reduces the amount of interruption to the participants shopping behaviour but also provides solid evidence of consumer emotions. However, videography alone did not allow us to identity if we were seeing 'typical' or 'atypical' purchasing behaviour. The subsequent depth interview aided in this.

When the videos and interviews were analyzed in combination with the shopping dockets and the generalized results of the survey an even more complete picture was uncovered. It was this blending of ethnographic tools that allowed us to understand the emotions recorded and thus meet the goals of our research. The remainder of this paper further explores these issues by highlighting in more detail how our blended methodology aided in understanding consumer decisions. To that end, first the complexities of consumer decision making are considered and following this the way our blended method addressed these complexities is presented.

First steps into the Supermarket – decision making

Consumer decision-making involves the consumer undertaking an evaluation of a variety of options available to them so as to make a brand choice. In very general terms, this decision results from two or more alternatives of choice (Deshpande and Hoyer et al, 1982, Luce, Bettman and Payne 2001). It has been suggested that consumers will gather information about a product until they reach a point where further information is not economically feasible without a purchase (Widing, et al, 2003). Yet traditionally, these decision making processes are often seen as a linear process of problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation and choice (Cobb, 1983). However it is suggested that such a simplistic assumption explains only a small percentage in the variance of consumer actions (Cobb, 1983).

Further insights can be gained if additional alternatives are added into the mix to understand how consumers make a decision. These include their ability to undertake an internal search, drawing upon memory, as well as undertaking an external search drawing upon the environment to provide the relevant cues. When first defined, consumer decision making theory suggested that the customer is a logical and rational problem solver, who transfers beliefs into attitudes and thereon into a form of behaviour (Markin, 1979). Whilst this might make it simpler to design marketing strategy, it does not enable understanding of the motivation to purchase to emerge.

This is a critical oversight. The increasingly complex and fluid consumer environment makes it essential to understand the reasons behind selection as well as the actual choice (Dijksterhuis and Smith 2005). In recent years, manufacturers and retailers alike have focused on their ability to 'tailor' their offerings to the individual requirements of their market, but this has also increased the amount of information that consumers must seek prior to the actual purchase. Whilst this has benefited the dyadic interaction in many ways (e.g. efficiency, knowledge and processes), consumers are being overwhelmed by a variety of marketing messages in the form of electronic format, in-store offers and traditional advertising strategies.

Central to this literature is recognition that consumer choices are built through time, and current assessments are made in the context of cumulative past experience (Chaudhuri, 2006). Whilst brand switching or brand trialling may occur over the longer time frame, consumers' dispositions rarely change, and understanding this tension provides useful insights. This is exemplified by Fournier (1998) who stated that '*Consumers don't choose brands, they choose lives*' (p367). Therefore, this multi-method research approach argues that a one-way communication process driven by the brand or firm may not always satisfy the criterion required to undertake such investigations. Instead decision making becomes a two-way communication between the consumer and the brand (Sheth et al. 1991) and methods used to explore this phenomena need to incorporate recognition of this.

While this approach presents a process where consumers are an active interpreter and processor of information (Bettman, 1979) it is rarely linear. In addition, the process is clearly one of heuristic learning, which is based on simple decision rules (e.g. rule of thumb) as a means of arriving at their perceived conclusion rather than undertaking any detailed analytic processing. This is particularly relevant for this research's context as it has been surmised that this heuristic dispensation has association with engendering emotional responses, especially for those times when the decision involves low involvement choices (Chaudhuri, 2006). Consumers are more likely to rely on instinctive, expressive inputs when a greater degree of cognitive input is not required. In Australia, there are over twenty thousand products in one supermarket (Lee, 2005), so consumers are unlikely to undertake complex decision processes in order to make such judgments. Instead they retreat to a more simplistic decision process relying more on heuristics. Indeed it has been noted that decision making quality deteriorates as the quantity of choice increases unless there are psychological devices in place to manage otherwise unacceptable levels of complexity (Hutchinson 2005)

It must also be assumed that consumer interactions with brands will not always be positive. For example 'preferred' brands may not be available and substitution may generate unease. This is in line with the model developed by Chaudhuri (2006) which recognizes that these hedonic values must include both positive and negative emotional influences and that the more important the brand or decision is to the consumer, then the greater the influence both emotion and cognition will have when working together in order to assist this decision. Emotion could be said to provide the hedonic knowledge about a brand, whereas the tangible aspects of a product will produce utilitarian and functional knowledge (Chaudhuri, 2006). Inclusion of the hedonic inputs in conjunction with utilitarian inputs highlights the critical importance of emotive influences as part of decision-making.

One breakthrough came with O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, (2003) asserting that decision criteria should include not just utilitarian aspects such as the core purpose of the product, the economic trade-off and social norms, but also the hedonic facets such as the influence of others, and how the product pleases in terms of smell, taste, appearance or sound. Each can have (somewhat) different emotional responses. It is a combination of all these and their interactions that will be a central influence to the outcome of the consumer-brand interaction. Those collections of aspects that balance positively will encourage a relationship, whilst those of a negative nature will be terminated.

Accordingly, how one person responds to brand aspects and interprets these brand associations will be different to how another person perceives the same brand. Whilst events or circumstances are often associated with an emotive state, it is not the specific circumstance, which produces the emotion, but rather the distinctive psychological assessment made by the person evaluating and deciphering the events (Bagozzi et al., 1999). Different people can have different emotional reactions (or the absence thereof) to the same event and an emotional response is partly dependent on a person's appraisal of their desired state and their actual state (Izard, 1991, Plutchik 2000).

Insights into Consumers via the Supermarket

The preceding discussion of consumer theory highlights a range of reasons that a 'single lens' approach to gathering data is unlikely to be effective.

First, people cannot accurately and fully report their decision processes. As consumers make decisions at the purchasing environment, monitoring the environment in which they make these decisions or reliance on their recall of such processes may not give a true nor complete picture. By integrating a range of methods, it is possible to compare and contrast observable behaviour with unobservable memories.

Second, evolution and 'evolvability' are poorly dealt with in single method designs, particularly quantitative ones. Emotions do not remain constant during the brand purchase and usage situations. This evolution also needs to be considered and a multi-method ethnographic approach showed potential for this. Brand 'history' matters. Part of the success of a brand is its image in the eyes of the consumer (Blackston 1993, 2000) and much of this involves a memory of past usage and the experience dominated by the emotions at the time.

A few other researchers have recognized the synergy from using multiple methods and this has inspired our design. Adopting a multi-method design for a quasi-ethnographic study (Elliott and Elliott 2003) enabled the research to overcome the limitations of a single approach in understanding, describing and explaining complex human behaviours (Morse 2002). The use of sequential quantitative and qualitative phases ensured that the research was not constrained by a single domain of enquiry (Tashakkori and Teddie 2002). Rather the design employed allowed the research to benefit from the strengths of the methodologies employed without being limited by their inherent weaknesses (Johnson and Turner 2002). The systematic, naturalistic approach taken allowed a breadth of research when confirming the established patterns of grocery purchasing amongst Australian consumers (Nielsen 2007) and then allowed greater depth when the focus narrowed to understanding the role that emotion played in brand choice in the supermarket of a smaller representational group of shoppers. The collection of shopping dockets ensured that behaviours previously reported were a true reflection of their actual in store behaviour (Fellman 1999, Mariampolski 1999).

Our research extends these approaches. In-store videography and the subsequent depth interviews allowed recognition of and understanding of the emotional repertoires experienced by informants in relation to their in-store grocery purchasing. A mix of research methods was applied in our study because each method on it's own did not provide sufficient insight. Whilst we could ask 'why did you choose that brand' and 'how did you feel about that choice' it quickly became apparent that we might not be gaining profound insights into the processes leading to consumer decision making this way because we could not directly interrogate consumers about all shopping behvaviour. We were limited to what they recalled and chose to report - unless a combined methodology was applied.

As noted previously, the quantitative method, a mail survey, was the initial foray into data collection. This was then followed by videgraphic observation, and subsequent depth interviews. Each of these will now be discussed in more detail and in terms of how they contributed insights to the consumer decision making processes both separately and in conjunction with other methods used.

The Mail Survey

The first stage of the research consists of a quantitative mail survey to establish the general behaviour of the target group. General population guidelines were used (ABS, 2003/04) to ensure consistency in the profile of the respondents. These were utilized to direct the design of the sample and included coverage of household size (single person vs multiple persons), household composition (families vs non families), average age of respondent and income. Questions focused on how often consumers shop in grocery stores, the kinds of brands they choose and the general reasons they buy. The survey fulfilled its purpose of providing informants for further research who had a similar demographic and buying profile in line with that theorized.

Its purpose was also as a 'recruitment tool' that invited a group of informants from a random sample, to participate in the more intensive, qualitative component of the research. The lack of depth insight and lack of representativeness that have been highlighted as weaknesses in mail surveys (Dillman, 1978, Bean and Medewitz, 1988) were not thought to be a problem given the general nature of information sought at this preliminary stage of the research.

But the results, taken in isolation, offered an incomplete picture. Although they provided statistical measurements of purported emotional connectedness to brands, it was not enough in which to truly understand consumer-brand relationships. The design anticipated this and, in contrast to considerable research in marketing, this investigation went on to uncover the more intangible aspects of consumer decision making within supermarkets.

Videography

Direct observation of consumers is seen as a possible way to capture detailed information about emotions, motivations and underlying value systems that may not otherwise be accessible (Heisley and Levy, 1991, Heath, 1997, Belk and Kozinets, 2005,). These topics are often difficult to articulate, however the visual images may reveal so-called 'hidden' meanings that are important to the understanding of the consumer and their behaviour (Otnes and Lowrey, 1997). Observations also offer the opportunity to capture actual influences rather than relying on self-declaration based on recall (Lee and Marshall, 1998). What the consumer perceives they do is not necessarily state fact.

Observations have been used in prior research projects to gauge insightful feedback regarding consumer in-store activity (Underhill, 2000) and are particularly appropriate for this research as they provide a way to understand the meanings behind human behaviour by allowing the researcher to capture the actions of the informant, and the environment surrounding them. In the past, observational data has been captured manually however there is increasing use of digital recording, both audio and video. This offers accurate and detailed data capture (Stafford and Stafford, 1993) and decreases (but does not completely negate) inaccurate/inappropriate interpretation of the phenomenon. With a permanent record, the observations can be reviewed by the researcher and/or viewed by other researchers (Heath, 1997, Underhill, 2000).

Therefore, the next stage included recruiting another subset of informants (from those who responded to the mail survey) to participate in videographic observations with follow-up depth interviews. This added to the multi-lens approach that was emerging within the study. The outcome of this method, gave indication that the predicted linear approach was unlikely to provide the only answers.

It has been suggested that using observations as a methodology is very time consuming (Chamberlain and Broderick, 2007) unless using a small sample. In addition the quantity of information collected when using videography makes the research data difficult to analyse and interpret. Analysis is doubly challenging because the complexity of information provided creates substantial potential for researcher subjectivity (Dodd and Clarke, 1998). On the other hand observation also provides the possibility of uncovering subconscious influences on consumer behaviour and reveals behavioural details of which they are unaware (and would or could not report).

The research was conducted during a shopping visit by the respondent at a supermarket identified as being familiar to them. Prior permission was given by the retailer to use the camera within their premises. Videoing began once consumers entered the 'dry' grocery aisles rather than attempting to capture images of fresh food selections. However it should noted that the video camera appeared to be 'on' to the respondent whilst they made any fresh food choices. The purpose of this was to aid the informant being 'comfortable' with the video focused on them by the time the focal shopping tasks were undertaken. Fresh food decision making, usually selected first, was not included in the study as it is largely unbranded and the study focused on emotions towards brands. The researcher remained at a distance to the shopper to ensure minimal intrusion into product selection activities. Video data capture ceased once the respondent proceeded to the checkouts as any behaviour captured here was not deemed to contribute to the core purpose of the research.

All informants were briefed on the process (a non-participatory observation of their grocery shop) prior to the actual data collection. A sample size was not pre-determined. Instead observation and interviewing was undertaken until no further insights emerged. This has been suggested as an appropriate approach by Patton (1999). After the twelve observations and interviews had been completed and evaluated, no additional insights were emerging and so no further data collection was undertaken.

Eight respondents shopped alone, whilst the remaining four bought family members with them. There was a broad range of ages represented, ranging from younger shoppers (mid-20s) through to older (mid 80s). This spread was included to explore if demographic profiles appear to have an impact on how consumers make brand decisions. A total of three hundred and forty-two product selections were made across the twelve shopping visits.

As part of data reliability and validity checking, each resulting video tape was interrogated several times by three researchers, including two who did not partake in data capture. Researchers who could offer a differing opinion or perspective of the situation (e.g. non-verbal communications versus behavioural actions) were selected to undertake this. As the playbacks were viewed, it became clear that emotions, both positive and negative, were definitely part of the buying process. The researchers watched the videos at the same time and made notes about what they observed. These notes were then discussed after each video and comparisons made about each other's perspective.

The collaborative insights that can emerge from repeated viewing and associated discussion is not something we have previously encountered in discussions of method in the literature. However we discovered that when multiple researchers viewed the video, there were divergent and changing points of observation uncovered (Spanjaard & Freeman, 2008). This did not indicate that the interpretations of the observations were erroreous. Rather; this highlighted the value of multiple perspectives; different researchers perceive different but not necessarily conflicting or incompable aspects of the same image

For this research, observation and re-observation of often subtle facial expressions and actions turned out to be critical. This was a very important means by which emotions were recognized. This has previously recognized by a number of researchers in psychology (Plutchik, 2000, Reeve, 2005). When the limbic system receives external stimulation (e.g. music, aromas) it sends impulses to the facial nerves which result in discrete facial expressions. Whilst this interaction is underway, the frontal lobe of the brain cortex increases the awareness of the emotional state to a more conscious level which in turn, impacts the rest of the body through hormonal, cardiovascular and respiratory responses (Reeve, 2005). The facial interaction between the brain and the rest of the body is important for emotional activation in terms of awareness and acknowledgement of the presence of an emotion. Patterns of facial expression have also been acknowledged as a means for recognizing these distinct emotions (Reeve, 2005).

Ultimately, emotional displays are part of non-verbal communication that encompasses a number of aspects such as facial expression, posture, gestures and interpersonal distances (Gabbott and Hogg, 2000). As suggested by Bonoma & Felder (1977*) 'Non-verbal communication adds to the meaning carried by repeating, substituting, complementing, accenting, regulating and relating it better than mere words alone'* (p170). Thus methods that allow matching a person's subsequent verbal report to their non-verbal actions provides further depth to their response and offers the further benefits of triangulation.

This process and the complex differential interpretations of the analysts highlighted the need to consider the depth interview in conjunction with the observation to further interpret and understand the decision making process. For example, whilst one researcher observed a participant picking up several products before making a selection, another researcher noted that the respondent touched their face, wrung their hands or repeatedly visually checked the available products. On several occasions no choice was made. It become apparent that further investigation to find the reasons for these forms of behaviour was needed (via the interviews). From the imagery alone, it wasn't possible to determine if for example lack of choice was due to an out of stock, uncertainty in brand selection or change in the product itself (e.g. new packaging).

A review of the visual behaviour of consumers revealed significant insights. Clear emotions were uncovered via distinct non-verbal communication, the 'bargaining' behavior between other family members who attended became obvious, often in conjunction with the range of time taken to make decisions. Without the inclusion of video data, so much would have been inadvertently missed. It was only through in-depth investigation of the images that emotive responses to the consumers' environment became clear. It also became clear that much of the emotion that could be observed was negative– an issue that had not been uncovered during earlier stages of data collection.

Also of enormous value were the (further) questions that these insights generated. Via the deeper analysis of shopping behaviour it became clear that there was need to consider the reasons for the emotions being presented. The interrogation of the videography also indicated a need to explore some decisions took longer than others, and why family members interacted with some products but not others.

Analysis of the follow up depth interviews was therefore considered to be necessary to ascertain the reasons behind observed shopping behaviour.

<u>Depth Interviews</u>

A depth interview with the informants occurred immediately after the shop at a local café recognizable to the informant. The venue choice was to encourage familiar surroundings and subsequent open discussion. Immediacy was thought to be important to ensure that all activities were easy to recall. The timing of the interview also aimed to reduce the number of drop-outs if later interviews were required from the informants. An audio recording was made to provide a permanent record that could be revisited if necessary, to lessen the need to make too many field notes and to allow the researcher to focus on the informant.

Originally it was intended that the researcher and the informant would view the video and that this would guide the discussion of the depth interview.

However it proved to be impractical to use the video images as a source of questioning. Extra equipment was needed for the video playback increasing set up time and causing problems in a café setting. The small screen available for viewing meant that the researcher and the informant needed to be seated very close to each other, and this potentially risked interfering with the casual, relaxed manner in which the interview was to take place.

Whilst alternative venues and delayed interviews were (re)considered, the disadvantages of these were thought to be too substantial. The second major disadvantage with the playback that emerged was that by using the video as the main backbone of the depth interview caused the informant to be more focused on how they 'looked' on the video rather than what they were doing.

A revised method was implemented including a minimalist interview guide that did not refer to the video playback. Informants were instead asked to select a small number of key brands that they had just purchased. The purpose of this was twofold – the brands chosen were to be an ice-breaker topic to open the discussion and by allowing the informant to select the products that make a meaningful contribution to their everyday lives.

Although there was still reference to the video data captured, the increase in the disconnect between the observation and interview was surprisingly effective in capturing deeper and unexpected insights. Whilst there were important brands bought at the time of the videoed shop, there were *other* brands that had not been purchased with which they had strong relationships and the comments revealed that such strong relationships were not necessarily dependent on how frequently they were purchased. Without the video, the informant had the freedom to move the discussion in this area and openly talk about which brands were really important to them, and why.

Archival Data

The final method of data collection asked the respondents to provide six weeks or so of shopping receipts. This aimed to provide confirmation that the brand discussed during the interview, and/or those selected in the video observations indeed reflected the consumers' repertoires.

Whilst not constituting a significant amount of data or a major part of the research, this does not negate the importance of it. The data collected provided a form of validation, ensuring that analysis of decisions and made and product discussed were appropriate ones to focus upon. Without it, the researchers may well have placed too much emphasis on products that were not necessarily important to the informant outside the video/interview environment.

An Example – "Nell and Gary"

Nell and Gary were two participants in this study and who offer a good example of how each stage of the research reflects the contribution a multi-lens approach.

This couple, both in their eighties, were observed to make many joint brand decisions whilst grocery shopping. The videographic images identified a clear pattern how these two interacted, particularly with evidence of their 'closeness' by standing near to each other, almost affectionately, at nearly every decision point. They spoke quietly on occasion, but many choices were made without the need for words.

In one instance, they approached the frozen food and dessert section of the supermarket. Nell initiated the decision process by opening one of the freezer doors, whereupon she proceeded to visually inspect the ice cream cartons on the lower shelves of the cabinet. Gary, in the meantime, moved behind her and visually checked the brands in the upper section of the same cabinet. After twenty seconds, Nell tentatively went to choose one product, but decided against it as she did not remove it from the cabinet and simply placed it back on the shelf. Gary continued the visual inspection, but this time moving to the other cabinets on either side, without opening the doors. It appeared that once Nell had decided against choosing a product, she dismissed this section of the store and was already moving the trolley away from the frozen food. Gary initially stayed at the cabinet doors, spending another five seconds double-checking ice cream brand availability before following his wife out of the frozen food area. It is possible he unconsciously experienced a sense of conflict – to choose a brand of ice cream, or to remain near his wife as he was often seen to do.

Using the video images alone, it could be suggested that Nell and Gary were looking for a particular brand of ice cream, which they did not appear to find (as noted by the lack of product selection). Both spent time ensuring that the brand was not there, as indicated by the combined effort of a visual search, however Nell appeared to have made her decision not to buy earlier than Gary (by walking away from the section) whereas Gary spent longer confirming his judgment. The video gave us information about how these two interact to make decisions, but it did not give enough information as to why a product was not selected.

This reason was uncovered during the depth interview. As stated by the couple when questioned about this, they reported:

> *"We were looking for Cadbury Vanilla ice cream. We couldn't find that today, so we're off to Woolies to see if it's there and then there's the High St store…" (Nell)*
>
> *"We've had the others … Streets and the others, but I reckon Cadbury is the best in flavour. Haven't tried the Paul's one, but I don't see any need to." (Gary)*

Further discussion of this opinion revealed the following insights from Nell:

> *"If Cadbury isn't there, we don't even bother with the others because we know we can try a different supermarket. If we couldn't find it all, we'd be really disappointed. We went off ice cream until Cadbury bought out theirs.*
>
> *We used always get Streets, and we don't know what happened…. Streets started to taste funny, so we moved to Cadbury and loved the*

flavour. It's a well known brand, so you can trust them with the quality and now we don't buy anything else"

Interrogation of the archival data revealed prior purchases for 'Cadbury Ice Cream' and no other ice cream brands.

Combining these results revealed that Nell and Gary considered themselves 'loyal' to Cadbury Ice Cream, to the extent they would make an additional trip to another supermarket in order to buy the brand rather than choose a product they were not completely happy with. The visual images gave an indication of the decision procedure between the couple, and the brands they bought. However the depth interviews revealed the kind of emotive connections they felt towards the brand, whilst the earlier shopping receipts confirmed they were repeat buyers. Without this combination of methods, it is likely that aspects of the decision making process, and the reason behind it, would have been missed.

Conclusion

Throughout all of the data collection phase, there was a conscious awareness that in order to provide the accurate results, it was important to capture multiple perspectives of the 'life world' experience (Goulding, 1999) using a variety of tools for data collection (video, face-to-face, self completion) undertaken at different times. These processes resulted in an emic perspective to ensure that the emotions felt by the participants are identified and articulated in their own terms and not predetermined by a research tool or by the preferences of the researcher.

As the descriptions of the phenomena to be studied and the research methods used to study it indicate, it was not one research tool or one interaction between research tools that provided substantial insights but rather it is the portfolio of techniques and their novel combinations. For example the survey both provides a broad context and allows us to position the people studied in greater depth within that context. The combination of observation and reflection overcomes many of the weakness of each as already discussed.

Such depth is necessary if we are to come to grips with the complex processes that are associated with brand loyality. Brand managers ideally want their brand to be the one that is 'loved' by the consumer. This in turn, provides a consumer-brand relationship based upon a high degree of attachment to the brand, positive perceptions and ongoing affirmative emotions for the brand (Caroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Providing the tools to accurately capture and understand this will prove challenging, however it is our contention that the connections and disconnections between the multi method approach described here make an important contribution to the development of such tools.

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