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ABSTRACT

Zona Sul was the first supermarket chain in Rio de Janeiro to provide online sales purchases services and it is the leader in its segment in the city. Therefore, it was chosen as the object of this study, which attempts to describe and analyze the decision-making process of consumers who use the Internet to shop for groceries. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with these consumers. The interviews were held at the moment they were shopping and the interviewees´ navigation was recorded by means of a software. The results showed that the interviewees search for convenience, speed and ease to purchase. Aspects from the website that partially compromise these objectives were identified. The conclusions bring suggestions to make the shopping process easier and faster.

Keywords: Decision to Purchase; Online Shopping; Supermarket; Zona Sul; Consumer

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet has provided retailers with the opportunity to innovate their communication with consumers and to even make customized deliveries (Srinivasan, Anderson & Kishore, 2002). The number of online buyers in Brazil has jumped from 4.8 million in 2005 to 9.5 million in 2007, an increase of 97.9%. As for the online retail in particular, revenues in 2008 were 8.2 billion Brazilian Reals (Época Negócios, 2009).

The supermarket activity, due to changes in its consumer profile and to the new technologies available to the retail industry, has had to adapt to new realities where, therefore, it is important to know consumer behavior in this new channel: the Internet. In 2007, for the first time ever, the volume of supermarket purchases through the Internet surpassed sales made by telephone: 1.7% through the Internet against 0.5% through the telephone (Abras, 2008). Nevertheless, the lack of studies related to the decision-making process of supermarket consumers shopping through the Internet in Brazil is highly noticeable.

Cutieri and Donaire (2000) cite the Nielsen data, where it is shown that supermarkets are one of the major representatives of the traditional retail industry and are also the main distribution channels of essential goods for the urban population. The share of the supermarkets in the distribution of food in the Brazilian market is 85% (Cutieri & Donaire, 2000).

Zona Sul was the first supermarket chain in Rio de Janeiro to provide online sales purchases, started in 1996, and is the only one that has a specialized distribution center, becoming, in the city of Rio de Janeiro, a leader in this segment. According to a report published by the Globo.com news agency, Zona Sul has an average of 800 online purchases made daily and 10 thousand active and registered consumers. There is an estimate that the revenue for 2012 from online purchases may be approximately 100 million Brazilian Reals, which accounts for 10% of the total revenue (Globo, 2012).

Since it is a pioneer in the selling of online grocery items in Rio de Janeiro and being an online segment leading supermarket chain, Zona Sul Atende was chosen as the object of this study. The research attempts to describe and analyze the decision-making process of consumers who use the Internet to do their grocery shopping at Zona Sul. In this context, the question of the research is: How does the decision-making process of the consumers who use the Zona Sul Atende take place?

Due to the scarcity of studies related to this theme, a qualitative methodology was opted for. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with online supermarket consumers. In order to achieve a detailed understanding of the decision-making process, the interviews were made during an actual purchase and the navigation of each interviewee was recorded by means of a screenshot software. The results showed the main motivations for the use of Zona Sul Atende as well as both the negative and the positive points noticed by consumers during the purchase.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Online shopping

According to the marketing literature, the consumer purchasing process comprises a few stages, such as: recognizing needs, search for information, evaluation of alternatives, decision to purchase, and post-purchase behavior (Kotler, 2000; Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2008). Ambrose and Johnson (1988) add in what pertains to the

variables of the behavior of online purchases, there are: recognizing needs, means to purchase (resources), other factors like personal and social considerations.

Kim, Kim and Kandampully (2007) identified five characteristics of the shopping environment which are important in online services: convenience, customization, information, communication and website appearance. Later, Kim, Kim and Kandampully (2009) conducted a research which evidenced that convenience, website appearance and entertaining appeal are essential for satisfaction from online shopping. The authors state that it is important to provide an easy-to-use online shopping environment. Jayawardhena and Wright (2009) also conducted a research to identify determinants to decide to purchase online. The results pointed to such factors like convenience, involvement and the attributes of the website as the main influence factors for consumer excitement to purchase online, and the attributes of the website also influence the consumers' intention to return.

The literature points to a variety of advantages, aiming at consumers, when shopping online: they do not depend on the store´s opening hours and location (Blackwell et al., 2008); availability of the previous shopping record, they do not need to interact with salespersons, nor do they need to feel pressured by them, the possibility of searching for bargains, which is named by the authors as a "treasure hunt", (Mittal, Holbrook, Beatty, Raghubir, & Woodside, 2007, p. 567).

As for grocery shopping, Murphy (2007) states that online shopping may be attractive to different consumers: those who "are time deprived", such as families with jobs that require a lot of time from their daily routine; parents with very young children, for those who think that grocery products may be too tempting; people who do not own a car; senior citizens or physically challenged people; the "techno freaks", those who prefer the computer to socializing in the supermarket environment.

According to Blackwell et al. (2008), for some consumers, shopping is synonymous with working, and not with having fun. These consumers may adopt Internet shopping more easily, which promises to be faster and easier, with a lower level of personal involvement. The author also points out that, for this type of consumer, the task of a marketing professional is to make the shopping process as easy and as fast as possible.

In this context, utilitarian and hedonic values exist. The utilitarian value may be conceptualized as a judgment of functional benefits and of a cost-benefit ratio analysis, including more cognitive aspects, such as economic aspects, as well as time saving and convenience. As for the hedonic value, it is more related to the benefits and the costs of the purchase experience. One example to be given is the entertaining part (Overby & Lee, 2006).

For Overby and Lee (2006), the hedonic value seems to have a meaningful role for infrequent online buyers, but not for frequent buyers. These authors conducted a research that attempted to understand the shopping profile of the consumer who currently shops over the Internet. The authors concluded that the utilitarian value of the purchase has a higher influence on the retailer´s preference over the Internet than the hedonic value of the purchase. According to them, some consumers prefer Internet shopping when they are in search of utilitarian values, such as lower prices and convenience. The authors then recommend that online retailers concentrate on providing an adequate utilitarian value to their consumers before concentrating on other factors of the website.

2.2 Influence of the website´s environment

According to Mummalaneni (2005), a website´s environment characteristics can influence consumers´ satisfaction, their loyalty intentions and the number of items purchased. Kim and Stoel (2004) also examined the issue of the website´s quality how it influences on the customer's satisfaction. Manganari, Siomkos and Vrechopoulos (2009) addressed the existence of the influence of the virtual store's atmosphere over online shopping behavior.

Mowen and Minor (2007) state that the store's environment influences an individual´s emotional state, which may affect their online behavior. Menon and Kahn (2002) conducted a research that investigated the effects of the stimulus and the pleasure induced from shopping experiences over the Internet. Their results show that marketing professionals have to carefully consider the website´s emotional impact on consumers. If the intention is to promote a website that performs a direct task like a single purchase, or something that requires an immediate reaction, and if a deeper exploration by the user is not required or desired, then perhaps it should be developed to be stimulating. If the intention is to make consumers spend more time browsing the website, it is preferable to develop a website that provides pleasant sensations. This will even stimulate impulse buying (Menon & Kahn, 2002).

According to Mowen and Minor (2007), a store environment conveys a message to consumers, like that of a high quality, for instance. The use of beautiful and eye-pleasing photographs is a way to induce pleasure in consumers as well as the use of good humor on certain occasions. Stimulus may be induced in several manners, such as the use of striking colors and an informative content that requires some effort by the user in order to be understood (Menon & Kahn, 2002).

2.3 Perceived Risk

One the most cited risks by the literature about Internet shopping has to do with privacy and the security of the information transmitted (Kovacs & Farias, 2004). Kovacs and Farias (2004) suggest that it is necessary to treat differently users who have already shopped on the Internet and users who have never shopped on the Internet. They state that satisfaction risk and socialization loss risk are also important risks to be considered when addressing individuals who have never shopped online. Satisfaction risk is the risk that the chosen alternative is not consistent with the previous beliefs related to it. Whereas, the socialization loss risk regards the fact that consumers prefer to do their shopping outside the Internet, as a source of pleasure and social interaction. This risk in particular did not present itself in the explanatory research done by Hor-Meyll (2002) among consumers who currently shop on the Internet. In the interviewees´ statements, consumers saw themselves standing out from conventional shoppers, as more innovative.

Another risk cited in the literature is the lack of sensory information. As pointed out by Blackwell et al. (2008, p. 155), through the Internet, it is impossible to try on clothes or touch and smell fruit, vegetables and leafy greens. Therefore, disappointments may occur more easily there than in the physical stores. Arruda and Miranda (2003) also add that some individuals quit or simply did not complete their online shopping, as through this system, they do not see and touch the product, hence the preference for the physical store.

2.4 The layout of virtual stores

Vrechopoulos, O'Keefe, Doukidis and Siomkos (2004) conducted an experimental investigation related to the use of three different types of layouts, typical of a supermarket online grocery shopping environment: Freeform, Grid and Racetrack. The importance of the study, according to the authors, is the interface design and interaction between the consumer and the computer are critical factors for the success of a business via the Internet. The research results showed that the layout significantly affects consumer behavior. The three types of layouts aforementioned may also be found in the literature regarding physical stores (Lewison, 1994), but the authors of the study mentioned adapted the navigation parameters of the layouts to the online environment as follows:

(1) Grid: consumers visiting an online store based on the Grid layout structure navigate through an organizational hierarchical structure, for instance: product category → product subcategory → end product;

(2) Freeform: visitors of a Freeform store may quickly find their desired products through a search tool or by choosing any item which is permanently on display on any webpage of the store;

(3) Racetrack: the Racetrack layout forces consumers to navigate through specific paths to find their desired products. This is done by placing only two "aisles" on each webpage. Consumers then need to choose one of the aisles on display to continue the navigation in the store.

Results from the study performed by Vrechopoulos et al. (2004) regarding perceived usability, ease of use, entertainment and time, for each layout, were: (a) Perceived usability: participants in this experiment perceived the Freeform layout as more useful to find products on the store´s online shopping list; (b) Easiness of use: participants perceived the Grid layout as easier to use. The Racetrack layout was perceived as the most difficult to use; (c) Entertainment: the Freeform layout was perceived as a little more fun, by a very small margin; (d) Time: it was found that this layout significantly affects the time consumers are willing to spend shopping. The layouts in which the participants spent the most time on were Racetrack and Freeform.

3. METHOD

According to Neves (1996), the lack of exploration in the literature available, related to a certain theme, and the intention to understand the various aspects of a complex phenomenon are elements that make the use of qualitative methods of research appropriate. In addition, one of the advantages of the qualitative methods of research is the fact that "they allow for a better understanding of meanings, of values and of opinions of the social actors regarding situations and personal experiences" (Fraser & Gondim, 2004, p. 140).

Given the scarcity of studies on the theme, the flexibility of the method was also taken into account, which favors the details of the phenomenon to be investigated and it is very useful for developing insights (Gephart, 2004). For the present study, it was decided to use a combination of two qualitative research techniques: in-depth interview and systematic observation

In this study, the use of in-depth interviews had as its purpose investigating how the interviewed consumers perceived grocery shopping on the Internet; the intent was to

know their opinions and beliefs about themselves and the researched shopping process. The interviews were initiated with questions about the profile of the interviewed consumer; following this, they were asked to do their shopping normally, and to say something in a loud voice if they came across a fact they regarded as worthy of the researcher´s attention.

Then, the interview itself was conducted, based on an existing script, developed from the literature review and taking the consumer decision-making process stages into account (Kotler, 2000; Blackwell et al., 2008). The interviews were recorded.

The observation, on the other hand, was used to investigate how consumers behave. The systematic observation method was opted for; a distance between the observer and the observed phenomenon was kept, as well as the objectivity of the observation process. The shopping processes were recorded by means of an open source software, called CamStudio (CamStudio, 2008). CamStudio is able to record all screen and audio activity on computers and create digital video files. Therefore, the shopping process, each movement by the interviewee's cursor was recorded on a video format for later analysis.

A total of twenty in-depth interviews were conducted. Interviewee choice was made through an accessibility criterion. Individuals aimed at were people who actually shopped through Zona Sul Atende and who planned to do the next grocery shopping on the Internet. The interviews were conducted as the interviewees wished, who were previously contacted by the researcher in order to schedule the interview. Respondents were in charge of scheduling the interview and setting the interview location and time, which could be either in their own home or work place.

Eight interviews were conducted in their own homes and twelve of them in their work place. This procedure aimed to assure that the interview and the observation process would take place in a real shopping situation, initiated by the consumer, based on their needs, at the moment they needed and wished to shop online and in the location and under the conditions of their choice.

4. RESULTS

4.1 The website

Figure 1 is a screenshot of Zona Sul Atende On-line (Zona Sul Atende, 2008). On the right-hand side column, the user´s identification fields are found, as well as links for shopping by session, through the online offers insert or through the Compra Fácil, Easy Shopping, and a link to a Chat room with one of the attendants should support be needed. On the top bar, there are several navigational options to browse the website.

The Meu Zona Sul tab shows all the products purchased by the user through the Internet, the telephone and also all the Zona Sul physical stores. The customers can also opt for navigation by sessions, to see all the offers, Zona Sul´s suggestions or to opt for the search tool to find products.

At the right-hand corner, the total amount spent is found. This amount is updated as the user adds or removes items from the shopping cart. Through this website area, the user can also see and edit the items in the shopping cart and in the checkout. The right-hand side column shows nearly all the special offers. However, if the user scrolls down, they will find a link to the one-hour delivery service. This service is limited to 10 items and is available to some areas in the southern district of Rio de Janeiro. Also on the

right-hand side column, there is a blank space where users can type in their postal code and then get information about the next delivery time in their area.

The central part of the website is its dynamic area as it changes during user navigation. For instance, when navigating the vegetable session, the available vegetable options and their prices are displayed. On the left-hand side of each product there is a photograph which can be zoomed in. Below the price of each item there is a figure, which is the product´s weight. Users have only the option of buying multiples of this minimum weight and not fractions. When users are on the homepage, the central area is composed of the Zona Sul Atende´s suggestions.
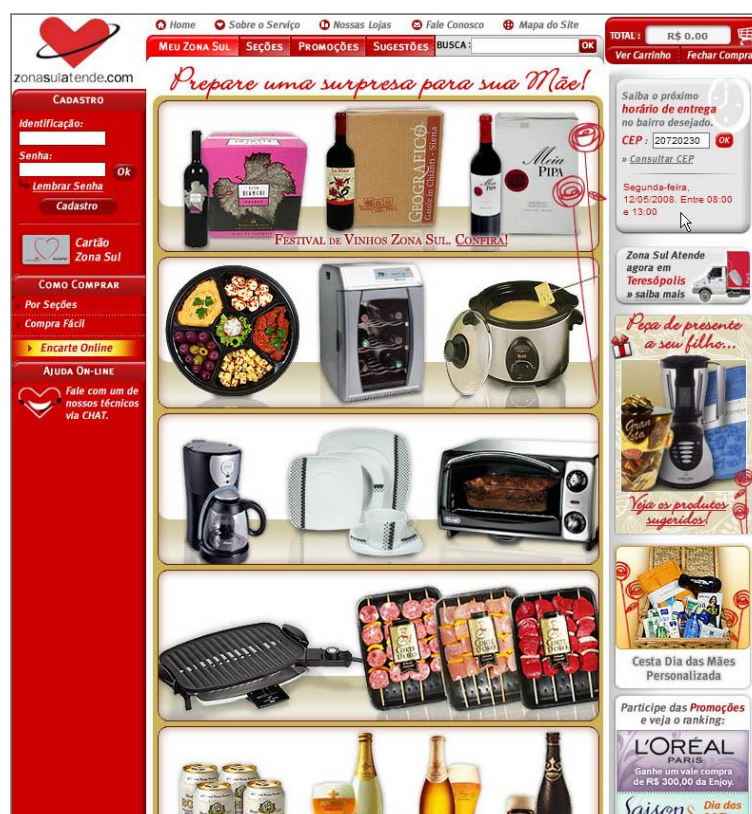

Figure 1 – Home Page of Zona Sul Atende

In order to find the products, users may opt for the navigation by session. When they find the product category whey want to see (regular vegetables, for instance), the Zona Sul Atende offers the user a list of the items found in that session. Another product search option is the Compra Fácil – Easy Shopping.

Through it, the user lists the products on their shopping list and the alternatives are displayed for each one of the items, one after the other. A third alternative is the use of the online offer insert for product search. This insert is a digital version of the insert which is physically distributed by the stores from the Zona Sul chain. The user may also opt to use the tab where the offers are and choose the "insert of the week" item to find the products offered with a discount.

Zona Sul Atende keeps a record of all the user´s shopping. Therefore, when going back to the website, customers can verify their previous purchases. This feature's purpose is to speed up the customer´s shopping, especially if the shopping is routine with many items bought. If a problem occurs during the shopping process, for instance, if the Internet connection fails, the Zona Sul Atende will record the shopping process and will display it to the customer as "Shopping Process Interrupted". When shopping is

completed and decided to go to the checkout, the user sees a series of options. In addition to being able to opt for to send it as a gift, the user can choose the delivery address and delivery times offered by Zona Sul Atende; users can even schedule the delivery for the day and the most suitable time. Finally, if the user needs the website´s team support, they can do it through the chat room option, by email or the telephone. However, there are specific working hours in which this type of service is available. The team´s support is not offered 24 hours a day.

It is possible to state that, according to the aforementioned layout classifications, the Zona Sul Atende is a combination of Grid and Freeform. If the customers search for products on their shopping list using the search by session option, they will be using a Zona Sul Atende feature, based on the Grid organization layout type. However, as customers also have the option to search for a desired product directly through the website´s search tool, the layout type used can be classified as Freeform. As such, it is expected that the more advanced users, who search for usability and performance, that is, those who want to rapidly find a product, choose to shop primarily through the Zona Sul Atende, freeform, search tool. On the other hand, users who are trying to learn how to use the website, and who wish that the website experience be clear and easy, should opt to navigate through the section tab - Grid system.

4.2 Interviewees´ Profile

A total of eight man and twelve women were interviewed; fourteen of them were originally from Rio de Janeiro and six of them were originally from other states; however, all of them lived in Rio de Janeiro at the time of the interview. The age of the interviewees ranged from 27 to 56 years; with an average of 35.6 years. Ten interviewees were single, eight of them were married, and two of them divorced. Being a regular user to the Zona Zul Atende was the criterion adopted and the search for interviewees was made by means of accessibility.

4.3 Recognition of Needs

In the first stage of the shopping process, the recognition of the needs for online grocery shopping seems to be similar to the needs of the physical grocery shopping. The interviewees reported that they usually start to notice that is time to go shopping when their pantry is running out of groceries. Oftentimes, their cleaning ladies are the ones who start the whole process; they let them know when they are running out of items, which are needed to perform their tasks, and then they make a shopping list. Some of the interviewees also said that they decided to go grocery shopping when they realized that some of the specific items they needed ran out.

Only one of the interviewees mentioned that the special offer insert sent by Zona Sul generates an interest in shopping; and even then, only if the special offer insert shows an item which is routinely part of the consumer´s shopping list.

4.4 Evaluating Alternatives

Once the need of "stocking the pantry" is identified, the question related to how to do it is then raised. As they are regular users of Internet grocery shopping and the fact they were contacted to take part in the research about this type of shopping, the interviewees spontaneously did not mention any decision-making process. They had already opted for online shopping. Yet, the reasons why they were led to opt for this type of option were investigated.

The two advantages unanimously mentioned by the interviewees were: time saving and convenience. As for the former advantage, some statements summarize well the fact that the lack of time is not only about lack of time itself, but it is about the fact they are reluctant to spend their free time shopping: "During the week, I am very busy. I would have to go to the supermarket on Saturday morning. I don´t want to waste my Saturday, which is when I have other things to do, and I don´t want to go shopping. So, the decision is I will do it online." "It´s much cheaper to pay for the delivery and then use my time to enjoy life."

Thus, the findings of the research match those from Blackwell et al. (2008) who describe the use of their time by people who do not regard going shopping as fun: respondents tried to quickly finish their shopping to dedicate their free time towards pleasant activities. As far as convenience is concerned, carrying the shopping bag, the weight, and getting around were the most cited aspects. When the number of items purchased becomes high and heavy, Internet grocery shopping becomes a good option, especially for those who do not own a car.

Other advantages perceived include: the ready-to-use shopping list from the website, users can also look inside the kitchen cabinets if they do not know whether they have an item or not or to make sure they are buying the right brand, they do not need to dress up to leave the house, they may interrupt their shopping and continue later and find out, during the entire shopping process, how much they are paying for the items chosen.

In addition, many respondents stated that they do not like to go grocery shopping: "Supermarkets are not places for leisure. Some people think they are, to see products on display. I think that the more you look, the more you buy. And all the associated inconveniences put an end to leisure." "I hate going to the supermarket. I have never liked it".

A group of interviewees in particular stood out due to the main reason why they changed from the physical supermarket to the online supermarket: consumers who had previously resided in other cities and who, due to the unpleasant experience they had in other supermarkets in Rio de Janeiro, they started to shop online when they moved to Rio de Janeiro. Their statements give a good idea as to what made them adopt grocery online shopping:

"I decided to buy on Internet because I get irritated whenever I go to the supermarket, because I like to go shopping. Shopping in general. But cashiers are impolite, supermarket shoppers leave their cart wherever they want, and I think that the supermarkets are a little too dirty here. Supermarkets are very small, very cramped. In São Paulo supermarkets are bigger, you know? (…) So a way to get away from getting irritated is shopping online."

This does not mean that disadvantages do not exist when shopping on the Internet. The main disadvantages stated by the interviewees were: lack of information, especially sensory information about the products; the long time it would take for the purchased items to be delivered; higher prices; the risk of not receiving something that was ordered. Yet, according to the interviewees´ evaluation, the benefits largely outweigh the disadvantages.

As for their choice for the Zona Sul Atende, the interviewees revealed that they did very little supermarket search as compared to other alternatives. During the research and observation process, all the interviewees went directly to the Zona Sul Atende

website. When they were questioned about this behavior, some of them said they had searched for alternatives on specific occasions. Two female interviewees stated that they had made a price comparison between Zonal Sul and Pão de Açúcar.

As the total amount spent on grocery shopping was similar, the Pão de Açúcar alternative was eliminated and neither of them went back to compare prices again. Another two female interviewees said they occasionally did a price search to buy a large number of items. But both of them said they had an interest in doing this type of search for the monthly grocery shopping.

This lack of interest in evaluating alternatives takes place, according to the interviewees, mainly due to three reasons: habit, so that there is no other charge for one more delivery fee and, mainly, because the price comparison process is regarded as boring. In short, the interviewed consumers do not want to spend too much time and effort in search for information about the supermarket and its prices. This might occur due to the Zona Sul customer profile, whose positioning is more focused on more demanding people, with a higher purchasing power. On the other hand, this may signal that the customer's knowledge about the website's functionality and the service as a whole inhibits the search for other alternatives.

4.5 Grocery Shopping

As the purchases analyzed in this research were scheduled by the interviewees themselves, they were all regarded as planned grocery shopping. As a matter of fact, it is possible to say that most of the monitored purchases were partially planned, as the interviewee already had their own reasonably structured shopping list, whether in writing or in their minds, and the decisions regarding brands or flavors were made at the time of their shopping (Blackwell et al, 2008).

The Zona Sul´s shopping lists offered to its customers were used by twelve interviewees, and even by those who had their own ready-to-use written lists, who were eight interviewees. One detail that contributes for someone not to feel the need to write down a shopping list when they do their grocery shopping on the Internet is that, when consumers are shopping from home, they can get away from the computer and verify the pantry in order to find out what is missing. During the research, one female interviewee looked inside almost all of the cabinets at home to verify even the brands that should be bought.

The disadvantages perceived, during the study when not making a shopping list, are two. The first disadvantage, a more intuitive one; is that there is a higher risk that the person might forget an item that needs to be bought, especially if the item is not included on the website´s shopping list, as it happened to some of the interviewees. The second disadvantage, a less obvious one, which was frequent to see during the research, was that people who do not make their shopping list decide to end their shopping because they were bored after a short time, around 40 minutes in general.

Whenever a user does not make a shopping list, they often start to remember the items by association. For instance, one female interviewee remembered to buy snacks when shopping for beer. Another interviewee considered the possibility of shopping for chocolate powder after shopping for coffee, because she remembered that, in her kitchen cabinet, the chocolate powder is kept near the coffee. In these cases, the search on the website ends up being hard work and this partly happens due to some characteristics of the search mechanism, which will be meticulously described in the "website organization" item.

Some of the statements show the sentiment of the female interviewees: "It´s not that practical" (…) "Searching for the product on the shelf is faster." "When I say the shopping list over the telephone I say "I want eggs", he already knows where to quickly click and order one, two or three dozens of eggs. And he is much faster than me; I'd have to say "wait a minute"…eggs, they are in the vegetables and fruit session or it is here or it is there.", and I keep looking where the eggs can be found so that I can choose them. Therefore, on my standard shopping list, this gets easier."

On the other hand, people with a ready-to-use shopping list in their hands tend to hold on to it until the end of the shopping process, even if they do not remain faithful to it. Comparing the website´s shopping list with the one they keep at home may also be a boring task. This happens because the shopping list kept at home is not as organized as the one on the website. For instance, the website´s list is organized alphabetically and oftentimes, the one kept at home does not have a logical order.

In the research, it was clear that this type of task spoiled the interviewees' good mood, especially when the shopping list they have at home was long. However, the read-to-use shopping lists on the website seemed to serve as an efficient support when shopping: they help users not to forget an item (in the case of users who did not make a shopping list) and help them quickly find their favorite brands and products.

At the same time, the shopping lists tend to keep users from comparing similar items, taking into account brands and prices, as when they see that the last item bought is on the current shopping list, customers readily included it in the shopping cart.

4.6 Price Comparison

All the interviewees made a price comparison between all the items on the website, one way or another. Sixteen of them checked out the Zona Sul Atende and saw the items available with a discount, one by one. It is important to highlight, however, that this search for offers did not make consumers choose items by price. As aforementioned, users already had a memorized shopping list (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000, p. 404) and this search, in fact, was like a "treasure hunt", in which customers expected to find their favorite brands on sale.

The special offers tab also seems to be a good stimulus for impulse buying. After all, as the user goes over all the available items, one by one, they could develop an interest on a sale item which was not on their list.

A female interviewee stated that she always checks the special offers tab before she finishes shopping, according to her: "In order to see if there is a bargain. I don´t miss the opportunity".

4.7 Environmental Influences

Previously in this study, the research conducted by Menon and Kahn (2002) was mentioned, in which researchers reported the results on the pleasure and stimulus induced from online shopping. As in this case, eleven interviewees reported that their shopping was boring. More specifically, shopping begins at a neutral level, neither stimulating nor boring, and little by little it begins to progressively become boring.

As seen, many interviewees spontaneously reported that, after approximately forty minutes of shopping, they were tired and felt like ending the process: "Now I am getting into the stage where I am kind of fed up of shopping. At this exact moment, I can´t look at, you know, at things I am really in need of."

All the interviewees agreed that, the less time spent shopping, the more pleasant the shopping experience is. Factors that caused tiredness, according to them, are: (1) It is necessary to scroll down and up all the time, to see and compare items; (2) To click and to have to wait for the screens to change, repeatedly; (3) The need, at all times, to keep checking the shopping list kept at home with the one on the website; (4) When mandatory items need to be bought, where the associated pleasure is non-existent, such as cleaning products and toilet paper; (5) To look for and to have difficulty or take a long time finding a desired item.

Few interviewees reported having experienced stimulus sensations during shopping. One of the female interviewees, curiously, often took turns between the website´s search by session and the search system. She spontaneously reported that she took turns between these two options in order to keep the shopping experience from becoming monotonous.

Two interviewees felt a stimulus when looking into the special offers tab on the website and said they really liked finding the item they usually buy at a discount; one of them felt a stimulus by looking at pictures of the items they liked very much and was tempted to make an impulse purchase. One female interviewee reported that making an impulse purchase is stimulating. This "treasure hunt" (Mittal et al, 2007, p. 567), or search for bargain products, seems to be something that breaks the monotony of the shopping process. In addition to the obvious appeal of the discount, the emotional point of view is a moment of rupture from a potentially boring experience for the website´s user.

4.8 The Website´s Organization

When one thinks of online grocery shopping, the experience seems to be simple. The process is about making a shopping list, searching the items on the website and concludes the purchase. However, the search for items could be more difficult than imagined.

The first problem encountered has to do with the number of items listed whenever a user searches for a product. As the number of options available at times is big, the consumer ends up wasting a lot of time and making a huge effort in order to find a desired item: "A lot of time is wasted when looking for mineral water among dozens of brands."

As for the Zona Sul´s website, being , regarding its layout, a combination of Grid and Freeform, the findings of Vrechopoulos et al. (2004) were confirmed during the interviewee monitoring process. Users who are more familiar with the website hardly used the item search to find the products they need by sessions, preferring instead, the search mechanism as a first option to find the products.

Although the Grid system, or by sessions, seems apparently more intuitive and easier to use, the research´s results suggest it is more exhaustive. It was common to see interviewees start their shopping process searching for the items through the sessions tab, and then later they opted for the Freeform option. According to the interviewees, this choice has the purpose of saving time. However, the Zona Sul Atende search mechanism presents a few problems.

The problems recorded by the search mechanism Freeform, are related to the fact that the search takes place by using the exact words. For instance, one of the interviewees tried to buy a razor for her husband as Presto Barba, but as the correct

name is Prestobarba, she did not find it. The system can not sensibly recognize similar words; therefore, it simply did not find any items.

Another problem is that, when searching for some items such as milk, consumers may receive a list of items which are not exactly what they are looking for. This happens because the website does not perform searches by relevance; it performs searches by exact words. For instance, if a customer types in milk in the search system, they expect to receive milk in carton or in powdered options. However, what really happens is that all the items containing the word milk are listed, with the sessions alphabetically organized.

That is, alphabetically, the systems retrieves "chocolate powder", "coffee and cappuccinos", "cereal bars", "whipped cream", "chocolate bars" and "coconut milk", before offering, as a priority, "powdered milk" and "milk in a carton".

Whereas, in the search by sessions, Grid, items are not always logically grouped as expected by consumers. One of the interviewees, searching for toilet paper, suggested such sessions "cleaning" and then "bathroom". There was not a toilet paper option in these sessions. Toilet paper was found in the "toiletries and personal care" session and then in the "toilet paper and tissues" session.

Another female interviewee did not know that soft drinks were divided into "regular" and "diet": "Come on, I can´t find them….I will not find them here because I have accessed the ones which are not diet, now they are separated, diet soft drinks in one corner and non-diet soft drinks in another corner. That´s why I will not find them (…) "In the past, they were not separated like this."

As consumers need to redo a search to find what they want, the shopping experience starts to become frustrating. This contributes to the customer to opt to end their shopping. Thus, a more flexible and smart search tool, as well as a friendlier organization of the sessions, would have much to offer consumers in order to make it a more pleasant shopping experience.

4.9 Perceived Risks

In general, interviewees stated that they perceived few risks from shopping on the Internet. Some interviewees, four of them, stated that they feel they run some type of risk when using their credit cards to pay for their items purchased on the Internet. Yet, they had never experienced problems with that.

The risk of receiving items such as lower quality fruit and vegetables, due to the lack of sensory information, was not reported. In general, customers trust Zona Sul Atende to shop for these items for two main reasons: (1) Zona Sul places itself as a more expensive supermarket, which sells high quality products, so they believe low quality items will not be delivered; (2) If a low quality item is delivered, all they need to do is complain and an exchange of items will be performed. One of the interviewees says: "Now, it´s not my case, but a lot of people do not like to shop on the Internet because you can not choose the quality of the vegetables. I don't worry too much about it, because I´ve never had a problem with that. I take chances, I order the items, and this will not keep me from shopping on the Internet…"

Perishable items, according to the interviewees, are delivered with an even better quality than if they had chosen and picked them in a physical supermarket. A female interviewee stated that one of the most important advantages of the online supermarket

is that "the description of the items is what the product is exactly about". That is why, she says, "they choose the items better than myself".

This is regarded as a relevant benefit. Once more, time and effort are spared. However, Zona Sul Atende needs to meet expectations. According to one of the interviewees; "They will not display something that looks….ugly….which may cause you to complain. And Zona Sul Atende, as far as I understand, is a place where you can choose items "with your eyes closed…"

The lack of sensory information about the product becomes a problem only when the interviewee has personal preferences: "In my case, for instance, I like a harder kiwi. Not green, but hard. Some people like it softer. I will not be typing in "hard kiwi, papaya like this....", so this is what you can´t get."

Some consumers clicked on the item´s picture with the purpose of verifying its quality, but, in general, this resource was primarily used to make sure that the item was the item desired by the shopping process. Nonetheless, this is an aspect that can not be ignored, for a bad picture could disqualify the product.

One of the female interviewees decided not to buy an item because its picture was unpleasant to the eye. "I am here thinking that if I worked for Zona Sul, I would try to pick the best picture of this Pamplona bacon and the best picture of the other items, and, still, this Pamplona bacon looks awful".

One difficulty found is the interpretation, by the consumers, of the weight of the fruit and vegetables by unit. This type of problem caused a brand new situation to one of the female interviewees: "Fruit, I don´t buy it from online supermarkets, because once I bought half a kilo of tomatoes and a half-a-kilo tomato was delivered. A tomato this size was delivered! So I don't know if it was the type of the tomato, which I didn't see which type it was. I saw "tomato, half a kilo", gee. When I saw it, it was a huge tomato, like this (showing the size of the tomato)."

Another risk cited by one of the interviewees is the lack of information about the item´s best before dates. This type of information is not available and some interviewees said they experienced receiving items whose date was very close to being expired.

Lastly, the risk of a desired item not being available was mentioned. Two interviewees said they were "devastated" when a supermarket staff member called to say they did not have the item ordered and stated that they did not accept substitute items in these cases. In their evaluation, the website should not offer out-of-stock items.

As for the risk of losing socialization, the findings of this research literally match the findings of Hor-Meyll (2002). There are no problems perceived in relation to the potential loss of socialization. As summarized by some interviewees: "If I could shop in a supermarket dedicated only to myself….A supermarket is not a place to meet people, it is a place to shop."

For the interviewees, not being in contact with people during the shopping process is an advantage and not a disadvantage. Standing a line, tolerating impolite people and a messy crowd are not necessary.

4.10 The importance of brands to manage risks

All of the interviewees determined their shopping through the brands they are familiar with, searching for lower prices among the acceptable brands. When asked for

the reason for this, the answer was unanimous: safety: "Over the Internet the advantage is that I can buy the products I am already familiar with".

Some interviewees reported that, on the Internet, the item´s brand becomes more important as there is no sensory information about the item purchased. Other interviewees went beyond this reasoning reporting that they would be unlikely to try new brands on the Internet, leaving this activity reserved for the physical store: "Trying out….this is something more likely to happen when I go to the supermarket and see the items" (…) "You can see it, you can touch them, but through the computer you can't."

Another important point is that the Zona Sul brand serves as a quality assurance. As previously seen, the supermarket´s reputation minimizes the risk perceived when shopping on the Internet, mainly regarding the perishable items. When questioned about the brands of fruit, vegetables and leafy greens purchased on the website, the interviewees´ answer was: Zona Sul. That is, the supermarket already has the image of an establishment which is concerned with the quality of its products. According to the statements collected, a supermarket which has not developed this kind of perception among their users may find difficulty selling perishable items on the Internet.

In addition to knowing Zona Sul's physical stores, some interviewees reported that a very important factor for building their trust is the after sales service. A female interviewee said that the attendants really listen to the customer when a problem occurs and other interviewees reported that they shop for items with no concerns because they know whom, if a problem occurs, they will be able to complain and exchange the item hassle free.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study attempted to describe and analyze the decision-making process by consumers who use the Internet to do their grocery shopping. Its object of study was Zona Sul Atende, which is a pioneer in this type of service. The research was performed by means of in-depth interviews and observation of situations involving a real online shopping process, performed by the interviewees. The main findings of the study are the following:

- Convenience is the main motivation to do grocery shopping on the Internet. Time and effort saving (getting around, carrying weight), as well as avoiding the inconveniences of the physical supermarket environment (lines, lack of space), were the main reasons reported for opting for this type grocery shopping.

- The interviewees seek mainly time saving, convenience and security, so they dedicate little effort in search of other alternatives. Thus, the acquired knowledge about Zona Sul, the way its website works, the delivery system and after sales function seem to strongly contribute to user loyalty. The service meets users´ expectations and knowing the way everything works keeps users from searching for other options.

- Despite the convenience attributes reported by the interviewees regarding the online service, a lot of them showed such feelings as boredom and tiredness when doing their shopping (normally after approximately forty minutes shopping), and some of them finished their shopping process without purchasing all the items desired due to exhaustion. This happens, primarily due to two factors. First of all, there are, according to the interviewees, too few stimulating moments in the shopping process. One exception is the search for "good deals" in the special offers tab. Secondly, the search

for items may be hard work. The search through the Freeform system is regarded as the faster mode by more experienced shoppers. However, the system could be improved if it considered similar words and ordered the options by relevance (not only alphabetically). The second alternative is the Grid system, the search by sessions. It also brings some inconveniences due to the fact that the organization by sessions does not always meet the expectations customers intuitively have.

- The shopping list saved on the website is an important tool, which, in addition to reducing risks of items being forgotten, it makes the search process easy and fast.

- The perception of risks, according to the statements collected, is low. This happens mostly due to the experienced acquired from the supermarket. On one hand, knowing the physical version of Zona Sul brings security as to the quality of the products offered. On the other hand, delivery services, customer support, and after sales services are regarded as reliable. In general, the Zona Sul´s reputation of being careful contributes to minimizing the perceived risks, even for the perishable products and they usually depend on the sensory evaluation, such as fruit. Interviewed customers in this study made it clear that they buy such items online because they trust Zona Sul in particular. However, they expect, naturally, that their expectations be met. Therefore, the care for the quality of the items delivered is an essential element to assure and reinforce customer loyalty in the services provided.

-The risk of socialization loss was not identified. On the contrary, interviewees showed satisfaction in being able to do their shopping without interacting with other people.

As a whole, these results show that Zona Sul knows how to gain the trust and loyalty of their interviewees. This happens due to the quality of the services offered, which contribute to minimizing the risks perceived. Nonetheless, there are opportunities to improve the level of customer satisfaction, by enhancing the search mechanisms and the organization by sessions in order to bring them closer to the users´ mental model (that is, the way they, intuitively perform a search task and select items for their purchase). Such a measure would also favor doing a higher volume of purchases by reducing the time spent in the search for items and the exhaustion caused by this process.

This study contributed to the perception by the consumers who do online grocery shopping. Therefore, it provided us with insights for new research themes. An interesting point to be researched would be to quantitatively investigate among a higher number of consumers this perception of online grocery shopping.

In addition, doing this research with consumers who shop for other grocery items could complement this study and offer ideas about how to have a more efficient website in the eyes of the customers. Research from the point of view of the supermarket could also be done: how they define the type of website used for shopping, how they see customer satisfaction and feedback. Therefore, it is essential to continue this line of research as a lot of individuals shop on the Internet and, with this type of research, there would be a better support to supermarkets and a better understanding of the consumers' point of view.

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