Evolving Shopping Experience Analysis
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The shopping experience continues to evolve with changing lifestyles and technologies. Shopping started with brick and mortar stores followed by catalog shopping, but now can be done through television marketing, the internet and mobile technology. Ruby Dholakia, Professor of Marketing at the University of Rhode Island, discussed her views on this evolving cycle. Being from India has influenced her strong interest in global fashion and has taught her how various markets throughout the world are different and are changing in various ways. In India, people either know how to fix things themselves or they have people nearby who can modify the items for them. This does not occur as commonly in the United States and is an idea that plays a role in shopping evolution. When it comes to the shopping experience, the past needs to be understood to predict the future fashion market.

Global business aims at meeting consumer needs while also meeting consumer preferences such as cost and time. Many companies respond to these consumer needs by supplying customization. Additional research is also done on demographics, psychographics, resources and orientation. Burger King’s slogan “Have it your way” is a great general explanation on how a franchise allowed its customers to choose what they wanted on their food order. Dell computers, Nike and Ford Motors are other big companies that allowed consumers to customize their products based on their wants and needs. Levi’s Original Spin campaign allowed consumers to design their jeans online. These changing company strategies require manufacturing flexibility, customer knowledge, and a different price-cost calculus. Strategists also need to understand shopping changes such as supply-side factors, factors explaining shopping behaviors, and changing technologies.

Technologies play a key role in transforming the shopping behaviors of consumers and improving products. Refrigerators are in every household in the United States and are a technology that has changed food consumption. They were first used just to chill food, but now smart refrigerators can tell people when they are out of a food product and order it for them, changing the food shopping experience. Mobile phones are another technology that is used by so many, and makes shopping more convenient because of apps for various stores. Other evolving technologies that affect the shopping experience include automobiles, telephones, electronic payment systems, television and the internet. Tesco is a UK based grocery store chain that started experimenting in South Korea. The company found that many people use their cellphones in the subway, and so they came up with the idea of the “virtual supermarket.” Pictures of items that can be found in grocery stores are placed on the walls of the subway stations, allowing people to use their phones to shop by taking a picture of the virtual item and adding it to their “shopping cart” to purchase. The items are then delivered to their home, making grocery shopping more convenient.

The buying decision process involves product characteristics such as relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, divisibility and communicability. Companies are incorporating the strong personal use of technology by consumers to change the way they shop for their products. Technology is changing the shopping experience making it more virtual, which may eventually hurt brick and mortar stores more than they have been already.