Cross-channel consumer behavior – a comparison between French, German, Italian and British consumers

by

Sebastian Rittinger
Institute for Commerce & International Marketing
Saarland University
Campus, Geb. A 5.4, D-66123 Saarbruecken, Germany
Tel: +49 681 302 4830
e-mail: s.rittinger@mx.uni-saarland.de
(*corresponding author*)

Joachim Zentes
Institute for Commerce & International Marketing
Saarland University
Campus, Geb. A 5.4, D-66123 Saarbruecken, Germany
Tel: +49 681 302 4475
e-mail: hima@mx.uni-saarland.de

Cross-channel consumer behavior – a comparison between British, French, German and Italian consumers

Abstract

In recent years, retailers in different European markets have increasingly implemented similar cross-channel retailing concepts, aiming to seamlessly integrate their online and offline shopping channels. As European retailers apply similar cross-channel concepts, the paper investigates the underlying assumption that European consumers are characterized by a uniform cross-channel consumer behavior. The paper draws on a large scale consumer online survey (n = 1,687) which was conducted in the four largest European retail markets. This study reveals that a uniform European cross-channel customer behavior does not exist. Instead huge national differences are prevalent.

Key Words

Click-and-collect concept, cross-channel retailing, Euromarketing, European consumer behavior

Cross-channel consumer behavior – a comparison between British, French, German and Italian consumers

Executive Summary

What has been the dominant driver for the European retailing landscape in the last decade? Only few retailers and researchers would question that the rise of "multi-channel retailing", the parallel use of different distribution channels, led to a revolution in the European retailing industry. Until recently, a major characteristic of the multi-channel strategy was that the different channels within the multi-channel system have predominately been operated as separated entities. However, nowadays retailers increasingly aim to integrate their channels ("cross-channel retailing") and amend their channel structures accordingly. For instance, following the path of French retailers Auchan and E.Leclerc and their "Drive" formats, the German food retail company real, the Italian grocer Unicoop Firenze as well as the British market leader Tesco launched pioneering "click-and-collect" services in their home markets in 2010. As it is observable that retailers across all major European markets apply similar cross-channel concepts, the consequent research question that arises is whether some kind of uniform European cross-channel consumer behavior exists, something like a homogeneous "European cross-channel consumer"?

Our paper, whose findings are based on a large empirical online survey (n = 1,687) conducted in France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, challenges the above-mentioned research gap and addresses two previously unexamined issues in the context of cross-channel retailing: We investigate convergences and divergences with regard to cross-channel "pre-shopping" behavior as well as the click-and-collect concept.

Our results indicate highly significant geographical differences regarding the cross-channel behavior of European consumers. This holds true for both research issues. We conclude that a uniform European cross-channel consumer does not exist and that "Euromarketing" is not a suitable option for international marketers. Taking our findings into account, it is mandatory for multinational retailers to localize their cross-

channel retailing concepts and to address consumers with nationally tailored marketing strategies.

Cross-channel consumer behavior – a comparison between British, French, German and Italian consumers

Introduction

At the Global Department Store Summit in New York in June 2010, Sir Stuart Rose, the former executive chairman of Marks & Spencer, highlighted that multi-channel retailing represents the biggest change to the retailing industry since the introduction of the self-service concept in the sixties and furthermore emphasized that the strongest opportunity for growth lies with retailers that can seamlessly integrate online and offline shopping channels. To some extent anticipating the thoughts of Sir Stuart, various retailers across Europe recently introduced concepts that connect different information, purchasing, receiving, returning, and feedback channels. Such concepts, which grant consumers full mobility within as well as between online and offline channels, are generally referred to as integrated multi-channel retailing or cross-channel retailing strategies by academics (3, 20) as well as practitioners (1).

It can be observed that European retailers tend to approach and try to succeed in the cross-channel movement with similar concepts and ideas. An underlying assumption of this development is that European consumers are characterized by a convergent cross-channel information and purchasing behavior. However, the validity of this assumption has not been thoroughly investigated by academic research so far. As cross-channel retailing appears to be a major trend in almost all European retail markets in the years to come, we address this research gap by comparing and analyzing the cross-channel behavior of British, French, German and Italian consumers.

The paper is organized as follows. We commence with an overview on the recent discussion of convergence and divergence in European consumer behavior. Next we describe the idea and fundamentals of cross-channel retailing in more detail and report on the current status and development of cross-channel retailing in Europe. Taking these insights into account, we specify our research questions and illustrate our research design. Subsequently, we discuss the results of our empirical study and conclude with a review of implications for international retail management.

Convergence vs. Divergence in European Consumer Behavior

The issue of convergence or divergence in the demand patterns of European consumers is controversially discussed in the academic literature (7). In his best-selling Harvard Business Review article titled "The Globalization of Markets", Levitt once argued that advances in communication and transportation technology would lead to global homogenization of consumer wants and needs (14). Apart from technology, free movement of EU citizens and access to goods and services from the rest of the EU is considered to specifically contribute to convergence in European consumer behavior (7). Nevertheless the issue of convergence or divergence in the demand patterns of European consumers is still controversially discussed in the academic literature. Some researchers indeed observe a significant level of convergence in consumer behavior across Europe (11, 13) and consequently proclaim that "Euromarketing is the name of the game" (13). Especially among young consumers which are frequently wearing the same clothes, watching the same type of programs on television, cheering for the same music stars, playing the same video games and exchanging thoughts on the same social media sites an increasing level of convergence in consumer habits is expected (12, 15).

However, the Euromarketing statement is not commonly shared in the academic literature. First, critics state that empirical evidence for convergence is usually solely based on macro level data, such as the numbers of telephones, television sets or automobiles per 1,000 people (10). However, scarce micro level data, delivering information on what people actually do with the products they own, is generally considered the more appropriate data source to determine the buying behavior of consumers (9, 17). Second, sometimes even highly aggregated macro level data does not always deliver a clear picture. For instance, despite using macro level information in a meta-analysis, de Mooij and Hofstede find that convergence across European countries can only be documented for a few product categories (e.g. television sets per 1,000 people). In many other cases they identify large differences in consumer behavior among European countries that are either stable or even growing (10). According to de Mooij and Hofstede, the main reason for this divergence is that national value systems do not converge over time. Thus the stability of national cultures is considered the main determinant for consumer behavior (7). Consequentially, the authors stress that convergence in European consumer behavior is "merely a persistent myth of international marketing" (10).

Cross-channel Retailing

Fundamentals of Cross-channel Retailing

Multi-channel retailing, the parallel use of different distribution channels (20), has grown tremendously in recent years and is anticipated to grow further in the future (16). When retailers simultaneously apply different retail channels as part of their distribution policy, there is a basic choice of either combining or separating the alternative channels (4). If retailers separate their channels, interaction between channels is avoided. Processes and functions won't appear to be cross-channel linked from the perspective of consumers (19). For instance, a retailer might operate with a brick-and-mortar store and simultaneously run a webshop that is branded differently. In sharp contrast, an integration strategy links retail channels (19) and aims to create a holistic shopping experience. It enables consumers to examine goods in one channel (e.g. the webshop), purchase them at another channel (e.g. via catalog) and finally pick them up or return them at a third channel (e.g. the brick-and-mortar store) (3). Hence, the cross-channel retailing strategy does not only provide consumers with different options to purchase merchandise, but also implies full mobility across the retailers' information channels as well as full flexibility with regard to purchasing, receiving and return channels. By combing their channels, retailers aim to better satisfy their customers' needs by exploiting unique benefits and overcoming the deficiencies of each channel (20). For example, the brick-and-mortar includes the potential to use all five senses when evaluating products, personal face-to-face service, the option of cash payment and immediate acquisition. However, in order to realize these benefits, consumers need to spend time and energy visiting the store that may not be open at convenient times. Non-store channels like a webshop enable consumers to buy merchandise whenever and wherever they want, lower time and travel costs as well as in some cases enable consumers to choose from a broader assortment (20).

As a direct result of increased customer satisfaction, several studies report that cross-channel retailers can significantly increase their share of customers' wallets (2) as well as enjoy a greater customer loyalty (16, 19). But, in order to realize a cross-channel retailing strategy, retailers need to overcome a number of obstacles. According to Zhang et al. cross-channel retailers face two major challenges (20): Organizational structure and data integration. Creating an appropriate organizational structure is considered the greatest challenge all cross-channel retailers are facing. That is because most retailers

manage their channels in a decentralized fashion with many of them maintaining separate teams for inventory management, assortment, marketing, finance and analytics within each channel. To become cross-channel and to exploit cross-channel synergies, retailers need to undertake substantial reorganization endeavors, taking factors like the company's history and current management structure, branding strategy and compatibility in each channel as well as existing information and distribution systems into account. To encourage cross-channel coordination, retailers must further revise their current compensation structures from top management executives to sales staff. Another critical challenge upcoming cross-channel retailers face is the need to build an integrated information technology that enables them to analyze data across channels in a holistic manner. Today, IT-systems are usually managed separately for each channel, resulting in disconnected databases for each channel. This prevents retailers to track information across channels and to identify cross-channel customers (20).

Trends and Developments in Cross-Channel Retailing in Europe

In recent years, retailers across Europe are increasingly willing to invest in cross-channel retailing services and concepts. This trend has been to a large extent influenced by considerable innovations and improvements in mobile connectivity and the internet technology. Especially two developments are expected to continuously impact retail channel structures in the years to come.

First, the massively increasing importance of cell phones with integrated computer, so called smartphones, which can serve as functional replacement for a traditional personal computer (PC) or notebook. From January 2009 to January 2010 smartphone adoption in the EU5 (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom) has grown 32 percent to 51.6 million subscribers (5). Until July 2010 this number has already reached 60.8 million (6). Hence an end to the smartphone boom is currently not visible and European retailers are forced to respond to this development by offering tailored solutions for smartphone users and to smoothly implement this emerging channel into their existing retail channel network. For instance, a retail company which is actively pursuing this topic is the British market leader Tesco. In October 2010 the company launched the first barcode scanner application for the iPhone in the United Kingdom. This service, which has been implemented into the existing Tesco grocery application, is free of charge and enables consumers to scan items and add them to their online

shopping basket for a home delivery order. The tool is designed to find any item stocked by the local Tesco supermarket, but is not meant to identify larger items that do not fit into the company's standardized grocery delivery vans. According to Tesco the application primarily targets time-starved professionals as well as "busy mums" that do not have the time or are not keen on browsing the internet for groceries.

Second the rise of social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter, which provide members with a platform to socialize almost instantly with each other. Especially the triumphant success of Facebook is imposing. For instance, British Facebook users in total spent 20 million hours a day on the website and about fifty percent of the mobile internet traffic in the United Kingdom is for Facebook (8). On a worldwide scale, if Facebook was a country, it is estimated that it would be the third largest in the world after China and India. The consequences for the retail landscape are dramatic as a new generation of "Facebook-minded" consumers enters the playground. These consumers are first and foremost not passive recipients of information, but more likely to create and share content about products, brands, and service experiences (8). To reach these consumers numerous retailers have recently started to engage in social media. They either started to participate in existing networks and/or developed company-owned social media platforms. An example for a retail company which successfully maintains a presence on Facebook is the German drugstore chain dm drogeriemarkt. Since the launch of the dm Facebook page in December 2010 the company has experienced a steady stream of fans. By the end of June 2011, half a year since the introduction of the page, the company has a fan base of more than 220,000 people (predominantly women) and strives to further increase this number: "Facebook is very important for us. It helps us to understand what customers really want." (Götz Werner, founder of dm drogeriemarkt). An example for a company-owned social media platform is "Migipedia" which is operated by the Swiss retailer Migros. Migipedia is a dialogue platform for Migros customers to discuss and evaluate products with more than 18,000 members. Illustratively, the impact of the community can be displayed at "Migros Ice Tea", a private label product which has been commented and evaluated more than 3,000 times on Migipedia. In an online survey launched on Migipedia, more than 80 percent of respondents voted for a PET bottle as a supplementing packing for the existing traditional tetra pack. Due to the positive feedback of the community, the company nowadays offers the product as PET.

Although smartphones and respective smartphone applications as well as social media platforms may also be used as purchasing channels, they nowadays primarily serve as supplementing communication channels. Smartphones enable retailers to provide consumers with the latest information and updates anywhere and at any time, for example while they are strolling through the retailer's brick-and-mortar store. Social media platforms enable retailers to interact with consumers and are relatively easy to combine with other online-based channels, for instance via a hyperlink on the retailer's Facebook page to the retailer's webshop. According to an analysis published in June 2011 by Robin Goad, research director from Hitwise Intelligence, top retailers can expect to receive an average of 62,000 visits from Facebook per month even if they have no Facebook fans. Furthermore he states that each new Facebook fan will produce an additional 20 visits to the retailer's website on a yearly basis, which in turn is expected to generate extra online and offline sales. Thus, smartphones and social media platforms primarily constitute channels for "pre-shopping" research prior to the actual purchase.

Apart from integrating and flexibilizing existing channels via state of the art mobile and internet technology, retailers have recently began to set up new formats that are entirely being built on the cross-channel idea. The most important concept across Europe in this context is the so called "click-and-collect" format which is predominantly applied by food retailers and allows consumers to purchase grocery items online and pick them up offline. The click-and-collect buying and fulfillment process is almost identical throughout Europe. In a first step customers log in to a specific website, compile their order and choose a pick-up time. Afterwards they drive to a predefined pick-up station and wait until their purchase gets delivered directly to their cars within a few minutes.

French retailers have been pioneers of the concept in Europe. Operating under the "Auchandrive" brand, Auchan created the first drive-through service in 2000 in Leers and has meanwhile expanded its network to 38 locations as of July 2011. Furthermore, in 2004, Auchan launched a stand-alone model establishing the "Chronodrive" brand. As of July 2011, the company operates 31 Chronodrive collection points across France. Prestigious French food retailers, for instance E.Leclerc with "E.Leclerc Drive", Cora with "Coradrive" and Carrefour with "Carrefour Drive", followed the path of Auchan and rolled out own click-and-collect solutions. While the format already represents a solid pillar in the French retailing landscape, the rest of Europe until lately has been

rather reserved in the adoption of the concept. But, in 2010, well known European food retailers started to offer click-and-collect services: The leading German hypermarket chain real, the Italian grocer Unicoop Firenze as well as the British market leader Tesco almost simultaneously launched pioneering click-and-collect formats in their respective home markets and the trend seems to continue in 2011. For instance, the German food retailer Globus intends to open its first "Globus Drive" in November 2011.

The reason why the concept has finally also attracted the attention of numerous retailers outside France is twofold. On the one hand the concept allows consumers to conveniently purchase the items they need online and to make use of online services like, for instance, virtual shopping lists. On the other hand consumers save the cost of home delivery and are in the position to schedule the receiving of their items when it best suits them. Thus the click-and-collect concept format can be considered a demonstrative "best-practice" example on how cross-channel retailing aims to combine the unique benefits of online and offline channels.

Research Questions and Research Design

Although there is a broad discussion in the international marketing and management literature whether European consumers move towards convergence or divergence (*see above*), academic research has not yet expanded this discussion onto the cross-channel information and purchasing behavior of European consumers and it remains unclear whether a uniform "European cross-channel consumer" exists. The previous section has shown that the cross-channel retailing movement in Europe basically materializes in two ways: On the one hand via the sophistication of pre-shopping and on the other hand via the click-and-collect concept. Hence we concentrate on two research matters:

- First we examine convergences and divergences in European consumers' cross-channel "pre-shopping" behavior.
- Second we investigate convergences and divergences in European consumers' assessment of the click-and-collect concept.

Our findings are based on data from a large representative empirical online survey (n = 1,687) conducted in early 2011 using a standardized questionnaire. The study was carried out in the four largest European retail markets (France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom). The participants are almost equally distributed across to countries. In

total, 47.2 percent of respondents are male, 52.8 percent are female. The average age of the respondents is 40.7 (SD = 13.5) and ranges between 18 to 65 years. On average, the respondents perform 63.2 percent of their purchases in a physical store, 29.4 percent via online store, 1.8 percent via smartphone, and 5.6 percent via catalog or other channels. A description of the sample per country is presented in table 1.

Table 1

Sample breakdown per country

	France	**Germany**	**Italy**	**United Kingdom**
Sample size	n = 416	n = 435	n = 410	n = 426
Gender				
- male (%)	47.6	48.7	46.3	46.0
- female (%)	52.4	51.3	53.7	54.0
Average age (SD)	41.2 (13.7)	41.0 (13.3)	39.9 (13.3)	40.6 (13.7)
Average purchases via shopping channels				
- physical store (%)	65.4	62.5	67.4	57.6
- online store (%)	26.9	29.8	25.2	35.8
- smartphone (%)	1.4	1.8	2.0	2.0
- catalog or other (%)	6.3	5.9	5.4	4.6

Table 2 displays the research design for the first research matter.

Table 2

Research design – cross-channel pre-shopping research

For purchases made in a **physical store**, what type of preparation do you typically do before purchasing?	
V1: Online pre-shopping research	1. Research product online at the retailer's website before visiting the store 2. Review other websites (not the retailer's) before visiting the store 3. Check out social media such as Facebook, twitter or 'star rating/reviews' by owners of the product 4. Use my smartphone to access information or pricing
For purchases made in an **online store**, what type of preparation do you typically do before purchasing?	
V2: Offline pre-shopping research	1. Ask family or friend for recommendations 2. Read store advertisements/flyers 3. Read magazines/newspaper advertisements 4. Visit a physical store to see the product 5. Ask sales associate for recommendations

To assess the cross-channel pre-shopping behavior of European consumers we distinguish between two perspectives. In a first step we addressed consumers' cross-channel pre-shopping behavior for purchases made in physical stores. Consumers consequently demonstrate a cross-channel behavior if they perform parts of their purchase preparations online, for instance, by researching products online at websites before visiting physical stores. Vice versa, in a second step, we addressed consumers' cross-channel pre-shopping behavior for purchases made at online stores. Thus consumers demonstrate a cross-channel behavior if they perform parts of their purchase preparations offline, for instance, by visiting physical stores to see products. We draw conclusions by combining the findings from both perspectives. The statements in both perspectives were designed as closed "yes" or "no" multiple choice answer options and presented in the respective mother tongue language of the respondents.

Table 3 displays the research design for the second research matter, the assessment of the click-and-collect concept, which was investigated separately from the first research matter. Again the statements were designed as closed "yes" or "no" multiple choice answer options and presented in the respective mother tongue of the respondents.

Table 3

Research design – click-and-collect concept

If an option to purchase online and pick up the item at the store were available, why might you consider that option?	
V3: Click-and-collect affinity and motivation	1. I generally would consider in-store pick-up 2. It is not convenient to have the item delivered to home or at work 3. I need the item as soon as possible and cannot wait for home delivery 4. I do not want to pay for home delivery 5. I want to be able to return or exchange the item right away if I am not satisfied with my purchase 6. I am visiting the store anyway so it is convenient for me to pick up my online purchase at the store

As a consequence of the nominal scaled data material for both research matters, we applied contingency analysis and Pearson chi-square test (X^2-test) to reveal divergences and convergences between the four European countries. We used chi-square to test the null hypothesis that there is no association between cross-channel behavior and nationality for each statement listed in table 2 as well as table 3. Hence the null hypothesis claims that cross-channel consumer behavior and nationality are

independent. The alternative hypothesis for each statement consequentially states that there is an association between nationality and cross-channel behavior and that observed differences cannot be explained by chance. Thus support for the alternative hypothesis suggests that nationality and cross-channel behavior are related.

Empirical Results

European Consumers' Cross-channel Pre-shopping Behavior

The results for the first research matter are summarized in table 4.

Table 4

Results of contingency analysis – cross-channel pre-shopping behavior

Online pre-shopping research						
	France (n = 416)	**Germany (n = 435)**	**Italy (n = 410)**	**United Kingdom (n = 426)**	**X^2-value**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**
V1.1	n = 199 (47.8 %)	n = 177 (40.7 %)	n = 246 (60.0 %)	n = 212 (49.8 %)	32.061	***
V1.2	n = 132 (31.7 %)	n = 107 (24.6 %)	n = 160 (39.0 %)	n = 148 (34.7 %)	21.448	***
V1.3	n = 32 (7.7 %)	n = 40 (9.2 %)	n = 50 (12.2 %)	n = 29 (6.8 %)	8.537	**
V1.4	n = 24 (5.8 %)	n = 33 (7.6 %)	n = 33 (8.0 %)	n = 26 (6.1 %)	2.416	**ns**
Offline pre-shopping research						
	France (n = 416)	**Germany (n = 435)**	**Italy (n = 410)**	**United Kingdom (n = 426)**	**X^2-value**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**
V2.1	n = 111 (26.7 %)	n = 157 (36.1 %)	n = 101 (24.6 %)	n = 128 (30.0 %)	15.416	***
V2.2	n = 118 (28.4 %)	n = 176 (40.5 %)	n = 70 (17.1 %)	n = 66 (15.5 %)	90.849	***
V2.3	n = 104 (25.0 %)	n = 96 (22.1 %)	n = 64 (15.6 %)	n = 73 (17.1 %)	14.799	***
V2.4	n = 125 (30.0 %)	n = 111 (25.5 %)	n = 121 (29.5 %)	n = 105 (24.6 %)	4.785	**ns**
V2.5	n = 37 (8.9 %)	n = 57 (13.1 %)	n = 84 (20.5 %)	n = 39 (9.2 %)	32.361	***

*** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .1, ns = not significant.

The structure of table 4 is as follows. First we display the number of respondents which answered the statements listed in table 2 with "yes" for every country. The figures in brackets indicate the number of respondents that confirmed the statements as a percentage share of all respondents within the respective country. Furthermore we show the results of the different Pearson's chi-square tests for independence as well as the respective significance level for each statement tested. With seven out of nine statements showing a highly significant relationship between consumers' nationality and cross-channel pre-shopping behavior, our results indicate huge geographical differences between the countries under consideration.

Being analyzed in more detail, our data reveals that Italian consumers perform the highest amount of online pre-shopping research prior to an offline purchase and are much more likely to consult retailer and non-retailer websites as well as social media platforms prior to a purchase at a physical store. This holds true for all significant statements that fall into this category (V1.1 – V1.3). At the first glance this finding appears to be surprising, considering that, according to recent data from Eurostat, Italy only had a household internet penetration rate of 59 percent in 2010 compared to, for instance, 80 percent in the United Kingdom. However, the entire data sample of our study results from an online survey and as a consequence consists of respondents who are knowledgeable about the internet. Thus, from our dataset, one can conclude that those Italians who use the internet, use it more actively than their European counterparts.

German consumers altogether show the lowest affinity for online pre-shopping research prior to an offline purchase. By expanding the analysis on the relevance of offline research for online purchases, it becomes obvious that German consumers generally seem to have a rather conservative offline based attitude towards cross-channel pre-shopping research, no matter whether they intend to purchase online or offline. For instance, 40.5 percent within the German consumer sample state that they read printed store advertisements and flyers prior to an online purchase. By contrast, only 17.1 percent of their Italian and only 15.5 percent of their British counterparts mention to do that.

Non-significant differences can be observed for the usage of smartphones to access information or pricing as well as for the habit to physically investigate products while simultaneously intending to purchase them online. The lack of significance with regard to differences in the usage of smartphones might be explained by the novelty of the

technology and the comparatively low diffusion rate of smartphones in Europe. Although smartphones constitute a major trend in the European mobile market and smartphone adoption rises at an amazing pace (6), mobile communication in Europe is nevertheless still dominated by traditional mobile phones. However, as it is expected that the substitution of traditional mobile phones through smartphones will continue, future research should readdress the issue and reinvestigate convergences and divergences with regard to the usage of smartphones.

European Consumers' Assessment of the Click-and-collect Concept

The results for the second research matter are presented in table 5. Regarding format and structure, table 5 corresponds to table 4.

Table 5

Results of contingency analysis – click-and-collect concept

	France (n = 416)	**Germany (n = 435)**	**Italy (n = 410)**	**United Kingdom (n = 426)**	**X^2-value**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**
V3.1	n = 388 (93.3 %)	n = 351 (80.7 %)	n = 374 (91.2 %)	n = 393 (92.3 %)	45.969	***
V3.2	n = 70 (16.8 %)	n = 17 (3.9 %)	n = 44 (10.7 %)	n = 100 (23.5 %)	76.228	***
V3.3	n = 154 (37.0 %)	n = 136 (31.3 %)	n = 127 (31.0 %)	n = 182 (42.7 %)	17.198	***
V3.4	n = 235 (56.5 %)	n = 200 (46.0 %)	n = 164 (40.0 %)	n = 232 (54.5 %)	29.251	***
V3.5	n = 201 (48.3 %)	n = 178 (40.9 %)	n = 168 (41.0 %)	n = 122 (28.6 %)	35.239	***
V3.6	n = 104 (25.0 %)	n = 136 (31.3 %)	n = 70 (17.1 %)	n = 183 (43.0 %)	72.579	***

*** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .1, ns = not significant.

Our results for the second research matter clearly follow the same direction as our results for the first research matter, but are even more explicit. All six statements within our analysis can report a highly significant relationship between affinity towards click-and-collect and nationality. Hence, the motivations to use as well as the general affinity towards click-and-collect differ vastly between the four European countries.

As the click-and-collect concept in Europe originated in France, French consumers represent the most experienced click-and-collect nation in our study. This is reflected in the very high acceptance of the concept within the French subsample. Regarding

motivations, French consumers especially acknowledge the opportunity to save the costs for home delivery and simultaneously heavily value the option to return or exchange items right away if they are not satisfied. This option is also very well evaluated by Italian consumers, actually even more than any other factor within the analysis. Thus, in Italy, the immediate return option is even slightly more important than the opportunity to save the costs for home delivery. Italian consumers represent the only subsample in our study in which the money-saving aspect of click-and-collect is not the top-rated motivational factor for the usage of the concept. British consumers instead are almost equally keen to save money as the French. However, they frequently plan to visit the physical store anyway and therefore, more than any other nationality in our study, find it convenient to pick up online purchases at the store. Hence British consumers tend to integrate the click-and-collect service into a holistic shopping process. German consumers turn out to be the most reluctant towards the concept. They heavily value the convenience aspect of having items delivered to home or at work and therefore the general interest in using click-and-collect is, without doubt existing, but clearly not as distinctive as in the other countries within our dataset.

Summary of Empirical Results

With our study we contribute to the ongoing discussion on convergence vs. divergence in European consumer behavior by transferring and applying this research question on cross-channel retailing as one of the most recent and simultaneously being one of the most influential developments in European retailing. All in all our results clearly support the point of view of de Mooji (9) as well as de Mooij and Hofstede (10) and other researchers that express strong doubts on convergence tendencies in European consumer behavior.

Managerial Implications

When going and operating abroad, companies, and retailers in particular, face the challenge of finding the optimal balance between standardizing and localizing their international marketing and business activities (18). Taking our findings on European cross-channel consumer behavior into account, it appears to be mandatory to localize cross-channel retailing concepts and that “Euromarketing” is clearly not the name of the game in this context. In fact our results lead us to conclude that a uniform cross-channel

retailing strategy, instead of being the name of the game, would more likely lead to "game over". That is because the success of a cross-channel retailing system stands and falls with consumers' perception of the system. Only if consumers perceive the different channels as being interlinked, retailers can enjoy the benefits of a cross-channel retailing strategy like, for instance, a greater customer loyalty (19). To ensure that channels are perceived as being interlinked, multinational cross-channel retailers are generally well advised to acknowledge and consider existing differences in consumer behavior across different country markets, for instance, with regard to cross-channel pre-shopping behavior.

Apart from sensibilizing management executives towards the need for localization, our results may also be used to deduce several hands-on recommendations for management executives on how to best market and position click-and-collect services versus traditional home-delivery e-commerce offers in the four European countries within our study (table 6).

Table 6

Marketing emphases for click-and-collect

	France	**Germany**	**Italy**	**United Kingdom**
Money-saving	*****	*****	****	*****
Time-saving	**	***	***	****
Holistic shopping	**	***	*	****
Security	****	****	****	**

***** strong focus recommended, * weak focus recommended

Taking our above mentioned thoughts into consideration, the compilation in table 6 shows that the largest European retail markets should each be approached with tailored marketing strategies for click-and-collect concepts. The "money-saving" aspect of click-and-collect compared to home-delivery is the only factor that should capture an equally prominent role in the marketing strategy for each country. Within the French market, as the most sophisticated click-and-collect location, a further emphasis on the possibility to check items physically and to return them immediately should be applied ("security"). This issue should also be stressed in Italy. Hence, in France and Italy, a focus on the

practicability of the concept is recommended. As a holistic shopping experience is of minor importance in both countries, stand-alone click-and-collect models seem feasible (see e.g. Chronodrive in France). A different approach should be applied in the United Kingdom. With regard to the British market, retailers should be more keen to demonstrate on how click-and-collect services can be implemented into the entire shopping process and can make it more enjoyable and smooth ("holistic shopping"). As a consequence, stand-alone click-and-collect models seem less promising in the United Kingdom as they do not entirely match the expectations of British consumers with regard to shopping experience.

Especially the German market constitutes a huge challenge for retailers that plan to successfully operate a click-and-collect format as German consumers find a lot of value in convenient delivery options. Hence an extensive marketing approach covering to a certain extent all differentiation factors appears to be most appropriate. Nevertheless a focus on the "money-saving" aspect should be maintained.

References

(1) Aberdeen Group (2010), The Roadmap from Multi-channel to Cross-channel Retailing, Boston.

(2) Ansari A., Mela C.F. et Neslin S.A. (2008), Customer Channel Migration, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 45, 1, 60-76.

(3) Berman B. et Thelen S. (2004), A Guide to Developing and Managing a well-integrated Multi-channel Retail Strategy, *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 32, 3, 147-156.

(4) Chavez R., Leiter M., et Kiely T. (2000), Should you Spin off your Internet Business?, *Business Strategy Review*, 11, 2, 19-31.

(5) Comscore (ed.) (2010a): UK Leads European Countries in Smartphone Adoption with 70% Growth in Past 12 Months, communiqué de presse, Mars, 30, 2010.

(6) Comscore (ed.) (2010b): European Smartphone Market Grows 41 Percent in Past Year, communiqué de presse, Septembre, 14, 2010.

(7) Dahan N.M. et Frech W.J. (2008), A review of European Business Integration: Does European Business exist?, *International Journal of Business Research*, 8, 5, 15-27.

(8) Deloitte (ed.) (2011), Consumer 2020: Reading the Signs, London.

(9) de Mooij M. (2003), Convergence and Divergence in Consumer Behaviour: Implications for Global Advertising, *International Journal of Advertising*, 22, 2, 183-202.

(10) de Mooij M. et Hofstede G. (2002), Convergence and Divergence in Consumer Behavior: Implications for International Retailing, *Journal of Retailing*, 78, 1, 61-69.

(11) Ganesh J. (1998), Converging Trends within the European Union: Insights from an Analysis of Diffusion Patterns, *Journal of International Marketing*, 6, 4, 32-48.

(12) Kjeldgaard, D. et Askegaard S. (2006), The Glocalization of Youth Culture: The Global Youth Segment as Structures of common Difference, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33, 2, 231-247.

(13) Leeflang P.S.H. et van Raaij F.W. (1995), The Changing Consumer in the European Union: A "meta-analysis", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 12, 5, 373-387.

(14) Levitt T. (1983), The Globalization of Markets, *Harvard Business Review,* 61, 3, 92-102.

(15) Mitry D. et Smith D. (2009), Convergence in Global Markets and Consumer Behavior, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 33, 3, 316-321.

(16) Neslin S.A. et Shankar V. (2009): Key Issues in Multichannel Customer Management: Current Knowledge and Future Directions, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 23, 1, 70-81.

(17) Peterson M. et Malhotra N. (2000), Country Segmentation based on Objective Quality-of-life measures, *International Marketing Review*, 17, 1, 56-73.

(18) Schmid S. et Kotulla T. (2010): 50 years of Research on International Standardization and Adaptation – From a Systematic Literature Analysis to a theoretical Framework, *International Business Review*, 20, 5, 491-507.

(19) Schramm-Klein H. (2010), Integrated Retail Channels in Multichannel Retailing: Do Linkages between Retail Channels Impact Customer Loyality?, *European Retail Research*, 24, 2, 111-128.

(20) Zhang J., Farris P.W., Irvin J.W., Kushwaha T., Steenburgh T.J. et Weitz B.A. (2010), Crafting Integrated Multichannel Retailing Strategies, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 24, 2, 168-180.