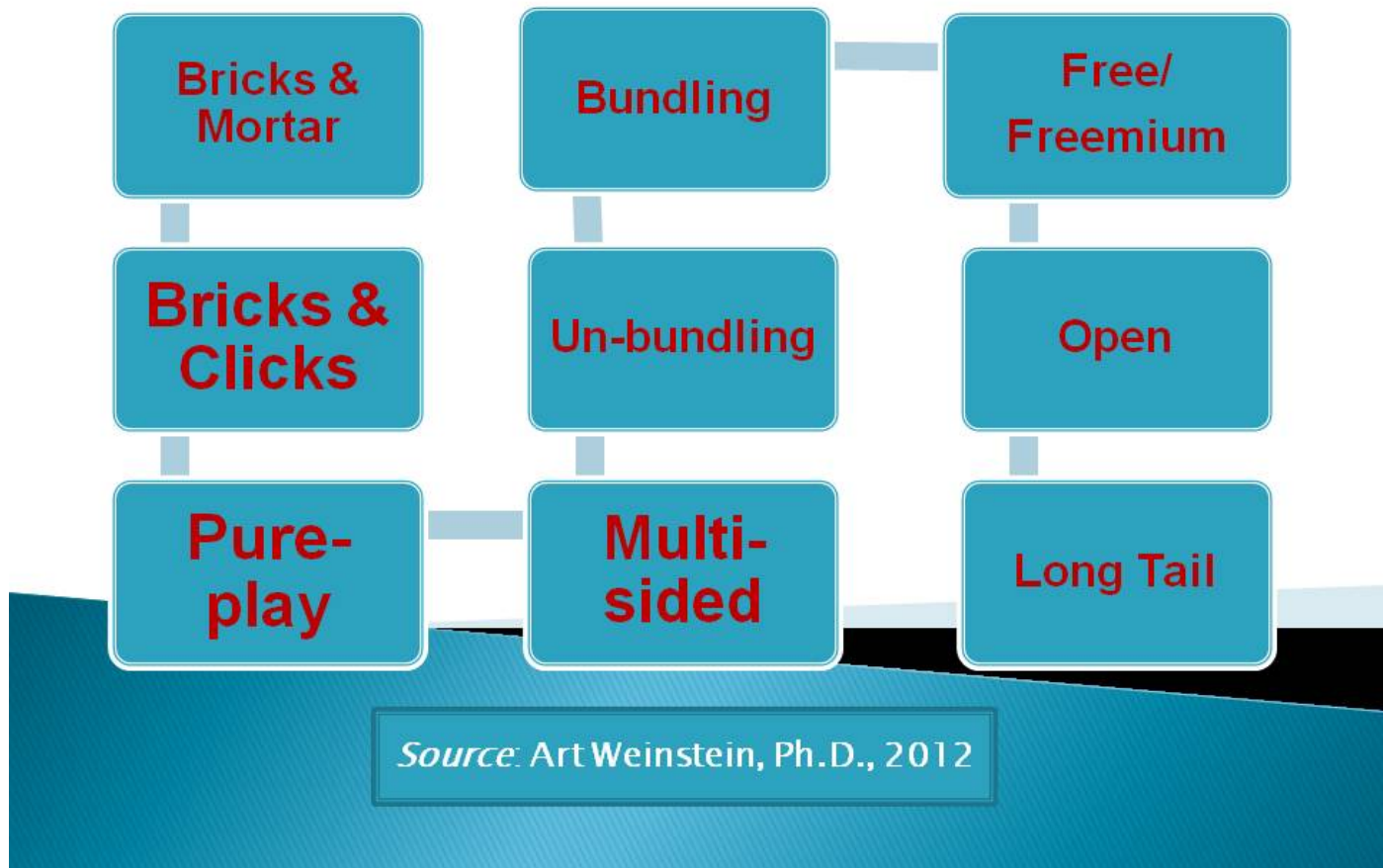


Are Multichannel Consumers Around the World Similar?

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The advent of the Internet has spurred a technological evolution that is transforming retail worldwide through rapidly emerging channels. Social media, mobile devices with location-based applications and reality-based technologies create a “showroom without walls” that distorts traditional distinctions between online and offline channels. One of the responses to this technological innovation has been a global proliferation of the multichannel consumer (MCC), a more knowledgeable consumer who gains information about the product by surfing and switching between channels such as brick and mortar stores, Websites, mobile devices and other emerging shopping outlets. Recent research has suggested that more than eighty percent of United States consumers research online before they buy a product in a retail store and it has been reported that seventy-eight percent use two or more channels to research an item before making a purchase. This type of consumer, who shops in more than one channel including brick and mortar stores, catalogs, Websites, or any other emerging channel, has been labeled the multichannel consumer (MCC). MCCs are not limited to the United States, and in fact, have been studied as a growing global phenomenon with a recent survey comparing responses from over 11,000 MCCs from 11 different countries (Pwc, 2012). However, it is still uncertain if MCCs are part of a converging or diverging global consumer culture.

Specifically, it is unclear if MCCs across nations are converging in perceptions and sharing a uniformity in consumer experiences and purchase decisions, or if MCCs are diverging whereby national cultures cause a dissimilarity. On the one hand, we know that culture affects consumer behavior and cultural biases influence the consumer purchasing evaluation process. On the other hand, proponents for a convergent global consumer culture report that the diffusion of technology, especially the Internet creates a more homogenous environment. Likewise, it is a diffusion of technology and the Internet that has surged the MCC.

What do you think?

Do you consider yourself to be a MCC?

Are MCC's homogenous (similar) around the world or does their culture affect what they value?

Do they make purchase decisions in the same manner?

Are salespeople influential in their decision making?

Would it be a mistake for marketers to treat them in the same manner?

What other factors may need to be taken into consideration?

[*This blog is based on a research paper co-authored by Suri Weisfeld-Spolter, PhD; Yuliya Yurova, PhD; and Cindy Rippe, DBA,

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