

Understanding the Customer and Markets

by
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Introduction

As stated in Assignment One our group has decided to look into ways to improve the transport of shopping goods. This comprises primarily the way from shop to home. Conventional shopping bags cause strain on hands and do not offer much comfort and choice in packing the goods, trolley are only available within shops and the parking space. Pedestrians and public transport users cannot rely entirely on those.

To further understand the possible customers and markets of a new product we have conducted a focus group discussion. Accordingly we invited several people who are frequent shoppers and use different means of transport as well.

Insights

Summary of Insights from the Focus Group Analysis:

Analysis of views on shopping experiences predominantly regarding transportation of goods from the checkout to the home with the view to designing a new product that will be of some help and assistance.

Focus group

Moderator

Hauptman Engel

Focus Group

PS Dosenkohl,	Age 26,	Employed
OG Gurke,	Age 22,	Student
HFw Tomate,	Age 20,	Student
HG Erbse,	Age 50,	Housewife
Fw Apfel,	Age 21,	Student

Analysis

We examined four main areas, which allowed us to gain and encapsulate the opinions of our focus group in the following areas:

- ÿ Shopping Patterns
- ÿ Problems experienced whilst shopping, regarding the transportation of goods
- ÿ Trolley and shopping bag usage
- ÿ Practical demonstration of product concepts

Summarising the shopping patterns has allowed us to observe that most of the focus group carried three bags or more which was generally a heavy load, ruling that any idea for the assistance of shopping would have to be able to carry quite a heavy load of multiple bags/items.

The focus group identified many problems that they have experienced whilst shopping, the main ones being the strain of the bag which tends to cut into the hand, whilst also having no structure to them resulting in goods falling out especially whilst driving and on the bus. In addition, depending on the strength of the bag, occasional breaking of either handle or bag bottom was an issue. Other factors acknowledged were:

- ÿ Grouping bags together
- ÿ Loading and emptying

- ÿ Paper bags and boxes breaking in the wet
- ÿ Boxes only having handles on the side
- ÿ Difficult to pack items into the bag at times (depending upon shape and size)
- ÿ Plastic bag have not structure, goods will get shaken

From the problems spoken about round the table and in later conversation in the meeting came many ideas and suggestions to improve the transportation of shopping. It was suggested that a more rigid lightweight bag could be designed which had more structure but was also lightweight with rubber handles. From this idea it was brought to light that Superdrug have a similar device but it is only used in store as a basket. It was also mentioned that to improve the bags a change in handles was needed as a particular problem identified was that the plastic layers come away weakening the strength of the handles. A suggestion made was to combine fabric and plastic for the handle, helping to increase the strength and durability, although it was recognized that Harrod's already have a similar design in place. Another idea mentioned was to improve the design of boxes as there are only handles on the side making it hard to carry boxes and shopping bags at the same time, a recommendation by the focus group was to maybe design a handle in the middle/top of the box easing the trouble of carrying both. A final suggestion that was made was to include a cardboard support for bags (to be placed inside) that could be collapsed and re-opened when needed helping to improve the structure and strength of the bag.

The discussion topic on trolley and basket usage provided us with the insight that on the whole few of them used trolleys. From this the focus group also talked about the drag bags (granny trolleys), they acknowledged how practical they were but found that there was too much stigma around them because they are seen as too old fashioned and used by the elderly. A suggestion made was that they could be made more 'trendier/fashionable' to attract younger users. The topic also brought across the discussion on 'bags for life', stronger bags provided by the supermarket which have to be purchased. The group agreed that the problem with these is to remember to bring these bags with them every time they shop, and that the bag does not offer enough benefit as opposed to normal bags to pay for it.

The practical demonstration of concepts that we generated so far (see appendix for drafts presented to the focus group), allowed for suggestions and improvements to our idea to be made, this consisted of proposals such as making the handle out of foam, rubber, or gel which could be especially shaped for the fingers helping to increasing comfort, in addition attention was paid to the length and the shape of the bag holder device as it was thought that if made longer and rounder it would not only reduce the pressure on the handle but increase the stability of the bag. The product demonstration was deliberately placed at the end of the discussion in order not to influence the group in their answers to possible improvements.

After the focus group had officially finished an after discussion took place, other issues were highlighted as it was documented that the group felt brakes were needed on trolleys, whilst they also asked who would we aim this kind of product at, the supermarket or the public. The group agreed that a handle should be provided by the supermarkets at the point of purchase, instead they having to buy one separately for themselves.

The most inconvenient aspects of shopping-good transportation as pointed out by group:

- ÿ The bags falling down
- ÿ Loading and unpacking
- ÿ The bags straining the hand
- ÿ The strength of the bag/ bags breaking.

Everyone in the group felt that the transportation of shopping goods is a problem or at least an unpleasant activity that is in need of improvement.

Attributes

Attributes are defined as “features, benefits or functions” of a product. The following list represents various attributes that are generally used by consumers to describe shopping-transportation-devices. These include primarily all types of shopping bags, trolleys, basket and to a lesser extent boxes, rucksacks, etc.

- Features
 - plastic or paper shopping bags
 - handle
 - provided for free in shops
 - different kinds of bags available
 - wheels, basket, baby seat, hook (trolley)
- Functions
 - hollow, holds shopping
- Benefits
 - Positive
 - § waterproof
 - § flexible
 - § light
 - § holds shopping together
 - § can be used as toboggan
 - Negative
 - § plastic bags easily collapse, no structure, therefore difficult to pack
 - § shopping gets mixed up in bag, not well protected
 - § not environmentally friendly, littering the street
 - § strains hands when carrying
 - § paper bags break in rain
 - § not right size available
 - § trolley with dodgy wheels, no brakes
 - § drag bags are deemed unfashionable

Customer Needs

A list of needs for a shopping-transportation-device/ service that

- holds/ transports Shopping
- allows to separate different kinds of shopping (frozen/ unfrozen, hard/soft, fruit/boxes)
- keeps goods in original state,
- cheap
- available In-store
- reusable
- strong, resistant, not-breaking
- waterproof
- easy to dispatch, quick to use
- enables comfortable transport, e.g. minimize strain on hand
- minimise any lifting or bending down
- better counter design at check out
- in case of trolleys: brakes, no dodgy wheels

Focus Group Discussion Plan

- Welcome
- Format/Agenda
- Ground Rules
- Icebreaker
 - Self question; How do you get to the Supermarket?
- Shopping Patterns
 - How often do you shop?
 - How much do you buy, How many bags? Heavy?
- What is the biggest Problem when shopping (related to transport of shopping goods)?
 - Flipchart: Problem, Annoyance, Occurrence
 - Determine biggest annoyance in the shopping experience.
- Trolley & Shopping bags
 - Do you use anything else then shopping bag and trolleys?
 - To what extent do you use the trolley?
 - How do you use the shopping bags?
 - How to improve shopping bags?
- Practical Demonstration
 - Concepts developed so far
 - Several products that enable shopping-bag transport
 - Best product?
 - Improvements to any product
- Closing Question
 - Do you think we have missed anything in our discussion?
 - Summarize.
 - Do you all agree?

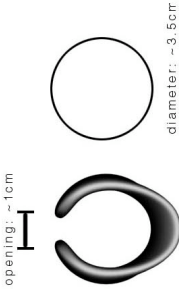
Bibliography

Crawford and Di Benedetto, 2003, New Products Management 7th ed, New York: Mc Graw Hill

Appendix

(Product design shown to focus group)

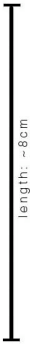
Shoppingbag-handle



Front



Left



Top



Bottom



material: metal, any

any measures +/- 20%

