Help welcome or not: Understanding consumer shopping motivation in curated fashion retailing

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the motivational reasons for and against adopting curated retailing in fashion and apparel, which little extant research addresses. In curated fashion retailing, stylists create personalized outfits to assist consumers with their shopping. Because consumers vary in their demands, retailers must understand the different factors influencing individual adoption decisions. For this purpose, we conducted 54 semi-structured interviews with consumers and non-consumers of curated fashion as well as stylists. The study enhances knowledge of online shopping motivation in consulting-intensive retail sectors and provides further evidence of the influence of contextual factors on shopping motivations. Most notably, we identify unique factors of customized solutions, a characteristic feature of curated fashion retailing. From a managerial standpoint, our findings provide retailers a lens through which they can better target marketing activities and improve sales training.

1. Introduction

E-commerce in the retailing sector is growing (Doherty and Ellis-Chadwick, 2010); increasingly, consumers use the Internet as an additional purchasing channel (Lissitsa and Kol, 2016). This development has prompted a shift in sales revenue in favor of web-based retailing (Center for Retail Research UK, 2017). This shift has spread to consulting-intensive areas, which have commonly been marketed offline, though the impersonal and potentially overloaded nature of e-commerce remains a drawback for many consumers (Holzwarth et al., 2006).

For instance, consider fashion and apparel, the most popular e-commerce retailing category (Euromonitor International, 2016). Here, consumer need for individual consultation is usually high (Brito et al., 2015), in that products are comparatively standardized in size and shape, and collections and trends change several times a year (Rajamma et al., 2007). To assist consumers with product recommendations and to improve the possibility for multi-attribute comparisons, many online retailers have implemented recommender systems or avatars. Such interactive technologies operate as virtual salespeople; however, genuine interactivity is still missing, and the issue of information overload remains in e-commerce (Baier and Stüber, 2010).

To compensate for both problems, a unique service innovation has recently gained attention in inspiration- and consultation-driven sectors such as fashion, home furnishings, and cosmetics: The central idea of so-called *curated retailing* is to support consumers in their shopping process by preselecting products tailor-made to their individual preferences (Möhlenbruch et al., 2014). Originally emerging in the United States, these personalized online shopping services have since grown past their niche beginnings, spreading to other countries (Hett, 2015). For instance, in Germany, the service has primarily surged in popularity in fashion retailing since approximately 2012. Professional stylists not only provide online help to consumers but create complete, personalized outfits. Currently in Germany, not only start-ups (e.g., Outfittery, Modomoto, Kisura) use the curated retailing logic, but also Zalando, the first pure-play fashion online retailer, has initiated a curated retail business (Zalon). In addition, curated retailing has entered the offline shopping arena as well (Hütz, 2016). Small, family-owned traditional fashion stores have transferred their consultancy expertise to the Internet by adding a curated retailing service as an entry point for ecommerce, an extension of their existing web presence, or an incentive to enter their stores.

Despite the popularity of curated retailing, such retailers are often not yet profitable because their customers' average shopping basket values and order frequencies are still too low. Moreover, many consumers show resistance to adopting the service from the beginning, in contrast to marketers and researchers' generally held but biased view that consumers are open toward innovations (Talke and Heidenreich, 2014). To overcome this so-called pro-change bias in their thinking, it is imperative for curated retailers to understand the motivational reasons

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both for and against adoption.

A growing body of literature examines differences between traditional and online shoppers (e.g., Mathwick et al., 2001; Rajamma et al., 2007; Srinivasan et al., 2002). Because curated retailing can be considered a hybrid between offline and online retailing, some motivational overlaps with both channels can be expected. However, making reliable assessments about curated retail shoppers' motivations is difficult. To date, no empirical studies of curated retailing exist, and simply applying previous findings to this new sector of retailing may neglect important motivations specific to it. For instance, when shoppers decide to consult salespeople online for assistance, the interactions with salespeople may have different meanings for the consumer than in traditional retailing. In addition, it remains unclear why more online shoppers, many of whom are usually value-convenient and time-saving, do not adopt curated retailing.

To achieve greater clarity in this respect, we address the following research question: What are the motivational reasons for and against consumer adoption of curated retailing in ecommerce? In exploring what motivates consumers to welcome styling help or not, this research makes contributions in four respects. First, it extends knowledge about online shopping motivation in consulting-intensive retail sectors. In particular, our results add the customized solution as a hitherto undocumented but distinct predominant motivational reason in curated retailing, while supporting and broadening previous findings on retail in general. Second, we respond to a call for follow-up research by Haas and Kenning (2014, p. 438) who advocate that "future research should examine motivational aspects of consultation in other retail formats" as they do for department stores. Third, contrary to common practice in shopping motivation literature, the study seeks to shed light on reasons against adoption to conquer the pro-innovation bias repeatedly observed by recent research (e.g., Groß, 2016; Lian and Yen, 2014; Talke and Heidenreich, 2014). As such, this study offers additional evidence concerning the influence of contextual factors on shopping motivations. Fourth, we contribute by describing an emerging and novel retail trend with significant future potential for both online and offline retailers.

We also provide guidance to retailers for practical decision making. For instance, our identification of curated retailing–specific motivational reasons can help them better target their marketing activities and increase customer engagement. In this context, several trend reports underscore the particular relevance of curated retailing for traditional brick-and-mortar retailers whose unique selling proposition has always been personal consultation (e.g., Boston Retail Partners, 2017; eMarketer, 2012; Magento, 2013). Thus, as mentioned previously, curated retailing can support even small traditional retailers in differentiating and competing against online retailers and to connect with a wider audience.

The article is structured as follows: We begin with theoretical background information on curated retailing, consumer adoption and resistance, and shopping motivations in retailing. Next, we detail our research methodology. Finally, we present results and implications for retailers.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Curated fashion retailing

Although curated retailing in fashion and apparel has recently surged in popularity, research addressing the phenomenon is scant. Only a few purely conceptual studies exist (Eisewicht, 2017; Gyllensvärd and Kaufmann, 2013; Möhlenbruch et al., 2014, 2016). These studies unanimously underscore the high degree of service orientation and personalization as decisive factors governing the success of curated retailing. Its distinct focus on consumer needs and tailor-made solutions represents a pioneering approach in retailing (Möhlenbruch et al., 2014, 2016). Indeed, given that salespeople offer expert advice and curated product selections, some researchers even call it a "re-traditionalization" of retailing (Eisewicht, 2017; Gyllensvärd and Kaufmann, 2013).

In contrast, the idea of curation and, more broadly, the role of intermediaries have been the subject of research for a longer time period. Historically applied to the fields of art collections and museums (O'Neill, 2007), the concept of curation has been used in areas such as music, fashion, craft, and food (e.g., Hracs et al., 2013; Joosse and Hracs, 2015; Shultz, 2015), though no clear definition has emerged. An exception is Joosse and Hracs (2015, p.207); in their analysis of food curation, they define curation as "the interpreting, translating and shaping of the marketplace through the practice of sorting, organizing, evaluating and ascribing value(s) to specific products." In other words, curators can provide universal or consumer-specific recommendations. As such, this definition provides a useful lens through which researchers can understand how intermediaries (e.g., collective buying groups, food bag services, food bloggers) provide consumers direction to their search for good food. Nonetheless, Joosse and Hracs (2015) themselves acknowledge that curation must be understood in context because the scope of activities can differ depending on industry, location, and scale. For instance, whereas evaluating new sourcing arrangements is a central activity for food curators, fashion, cosmetic, and furniture curators focus little on these arrangements.

Therefore, we opt for a more nuanced conceptualization of curation that places more emphasis on the specific nature of curated retailing. Curated retailing creates a new shopping experience; it incorporates convenient and effective shopping online and sales advice while focusing on solutions. To reflect these aspects, herein we use the following definition: Curated retailing combines convenient online shopping with personal consultation service to provide a more personalized online experience through curated product selections, orientation and decision aids, and tailor-made solutions based on the customer's preferences.

In the context of curated fashion retailing, stylists take on the role of curators. After registering for free, consumers must submit an online questionnaire detailing their fashion preferences (e.g., fashion style, color, size, budget). In the next step, consumers choose a stylist, who creates personalized outfits that are then shipped in the form of outfit boxes. To further personalize the one-to-one interaction between consumer and stylist, the consumer can optionally provide additional data
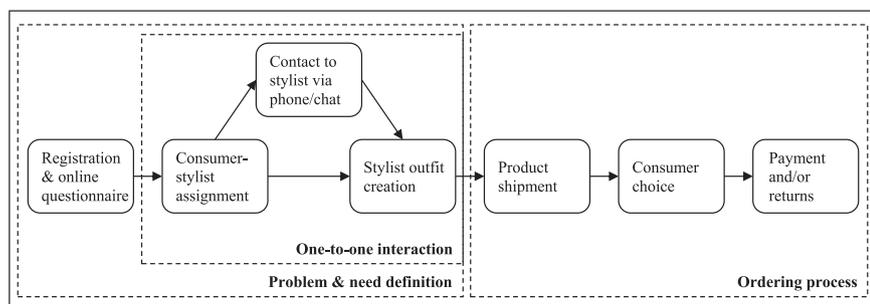

Fig. 1. Conceptualization of curated fashion retailing.

via phone or online chat. The service is free of charge, and consumers pay only for the products retained (Gyllensvärd and Kaufmann, 2013). Fig. 1 graphically depicts the process.

If the retailer is to remain competitive, it must understand the individual adoption throughout the various process steps, as requests and needs differ. To do so requires deep knowledge of the determinants of consumer acceptance and resistance.

2.2. Reasons for and against adoption

Curated retailing can be considered a service innovation in retailing. Although innovations require consumers to change their behaviors and attitudes, only few researchers have explicitly addressed the factors that negatively influence the adoption of innovations (e.g., Kleijnen et al., 2009; Lian and Yen, 2014). Instead, most research in the field of adoption traditionally reveals a pro-change bias, supposing that consumers are open to change and new products (Talke and Heidenreich, 2014).

According to Talke and Heidenreich (2014), however, consumers more typically exhibit resistance to change toward innovations. They suggest that consumer reactions are context specific and identify three categories of contextual factors: adopter-specific (e.g., personality traits, motivation, involvement, previous experience), situation-specific (e.g., product and service usage, time pressure, retail environment specifics), and innovation-specific (e.g., compatibility, complexity, relative advantage).

This contextual categorization is in line with the behavioral reasoning perspective (e.g., Claudy et al., 2015; Gupta and Arora, 2017; Westaby, 2005). In this theory, reasons are "specific subjective factors people use to explain their anticipated behavior" (Westaby, 2005, p. 100). By differentiating analytically between "reasons for" and "reasons against" a certain behavior, behavioral reasoning theory allows researchers to study the determinants for adoption and resistance together in a single decision framework. This distinction is even more important considering that reasons for and against are distinct concepts rather than mere opposites (Chatzidakis and Lee, 2012). For instance, consumers may value the benefits of curated retailing but still refuse to adopt it because of perceived image risks. Because the transferability of reasons theory has received general acceptance (Chatzidakis and Lee, 2012), we adapt its "for" and "against" dichotomy in this study to the context of shopping motivations in fashion retailing. Hereinafter, we refer to motivational reasons, specifically to "motivations for adoption" (MFA) and "motivations against adoption" (MAA). Together with the literature on shopping motivations, reasons theory provides a lens for exploring both positive and negative motivational reasons in curated retailing.

2.3. Shopping motivation in retailing

Since Tauber (1972) seminal study on why consumers shop, shopping motivation has become a commonly investigated concept in marketing-oriented consumer research. In this literature stream, shopping motivations usually refer to "forces investigating behavior to satisfy internal need states" (Westbrook and Black, 1985, p.89) and are thus essential for a full understanding of consumer shopping activities. Motivations identified in previous research range from abstract to specific (Wagner and Rudolph, 2010).

At present, the distinction between hedonic and utilitarian motivational reasons represents the most widely used classification in literature (e.g., Arnold and Reynolds, 2012; Babin et al., 1994; Jones et al., 2006). Accordingly, utilitarian shoppers value an efficient, non-emotional, and task-related outcome to satisfy their actual needs, while hedonic shoppers are motivated by the desire for entertainment, satisfaction, and a pleasurable shopping experience itself. Because utilitarian and hedonic reasons can occur simultaneously (Westbrook and Black, 1985), it can be assumed that shopping is also influenced by

reasons that go beyond the mere acquisition of products and services (Davis and Hodges, 2012).

Prior research shows that online and offline shoppers behave differently (e.g., Alba et al., 1997; Chiang and Dholakia, 2003; Evanschitzky et al., 2004; Srinivasan et al., 2002). Online shoppers correspondingly highly value convenience and time savings and demand more product and information variety as well as more personalized products than offline shoppers (Brashear et al., 2009; Szymanski and Hise, 2000). Additionally, some online shoppers seek enjoyment and escapism during their online sessions (To et al., 2007). Offline shoppers, in contrast, generally prefer immediate possession of products or services, haptic experiences, sensory stimulation from the store environment, and social interaction (Balasubramanian, 1998; Rohm and Swaminathan, 2004). Offline shoppers who seek consultation with salespeople traditionally expect them to provide tailored information and to reduce purchase uncertainty (Pieters et al., 1998; Ponder et al., 2006). Haas and Kenning (2014) extend this general understanding of salesperson consultation with three motivational reasons: (1) the utilitarian factor efficiency orientation and two hedonic factors, (2) shopping enjoyment and (3) the disposition toward salespeople.

Previous studies indicate that gender has a moderating influence on both online and offline shopping motivations (e.g., Hansen and Jensen, 2008; Hart et al., 2007; Torres et al., 2001). Traditionally, women place a greater emphasis on shopping enjoyment, social interaction, and assortment uniqueness (Seock and Bailey, 2008), while men desire convenience, easily available information, and time savings in their shopping (Noble et al., 2006). In addition, women are less emotionally gratified with online shopping because they have a greater need to physically examine products before purchasing (Cho and Workman, 2011). They also perceive greater inconvenience online because they do not trust in the Internet as much as men do (Garbarino and Strahilevitz, 2004).

As a hybrid between offline and online shopping, curated retailing unites convenient online shopping with personal consultation. However, extant knowledge on shopping motivation is not sufficient to make reliable and fully conclusive predictions concerning this new retail format. Moreover, the few purely conceptual, studies on curated retailing (Eisewicht, 2017; Gyllensvärd and Kaufmann, 2013; Möhlenbruch et al., 2014, 2016) do not investigate or discuss shopping motivations. With our research endeavors, we aim to fill this gap.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design and sample selection

As outlined in the previous section, shopping motivation in retailing has become an established field of research. The literature on curated retailing, however, is relatively sparse. Therefore, we used an explorative qualitative strategy. Qualitative methods in exploratory research facilitate a flexible approach (Neumann, 2014), and allow researchers to develop an in-depth understanding of distinct shopping behaviors (King and Dennis, 2003). Furthermore, qualitative methods are suitable for eliciting context-specific motivational reasons as categories (Claudy et al., 2015).

To this end, we applied a purposeful sampling strategy to recruit a broad variety of participant groups for semi-structured interviews, making use of several professional and personal contacts. Because shopping for apparel is driven by both hedonic and utilitarian reasons, we chose it as an exemplary curated retailing context. To better account for motivational reasons against adoption, we included in our sample not only consumers' perspectives but also non-consumers' and salespeople's (referred to as "stylists" henceforth) viewpoints. To date, little research investigates non-consumer perceptions of online shopping (e.g. Faqih, 2016; Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2013), and stylists can capture those motivational reasons consumers cannot easily express or of which they are not aware (McFarland et al., 2006). To tap into the insights of

Table 1
Sample characteristics.

Groups	Frequency	Age (in Years)		
		20–29	30–39	40 or more
FC	10	6	1	3
FNC	11	6	4	1
MC	11	7	4	0
MNC	10	6	4	0
S	12	6	5	1

Notes: FC = Female Consumer, FNC = Female Non-Consumer, MC = Male Consumer, MNC = Male Non-Consumer, S = Stylist.

stylists, we collaborated with a single German curated fashion retailer. The consumer group, in contrast, covered perceptions related to various curated fashion retailers to guarantee the independence of the consumer findings.

In total, we conducted 54 semi-structured interviews within a three-month period in Germany. Specifically, the sampling consisted of 21 consumers (FC = 10; MC = 11) and 21 non-consumers (FNC = 11; MNC = 10), both female and male, and 12 stylists (S). Table 1 presents sample characteristics.

Although we aimed to vary the sample in terms of age, the number of younger interviewees outweighs the number of older ones, which is not surprising considering that younger consumers are known to be more prone to using new technologies or innovations for product information, search, or evaluation (Papagiannidis et al., 2013; Wood, 2002). In addition, in line with prior motivational studies that control for gender differences (e.g., Bae and Lee, 2011; Garbarino and Strahilevitz, 2004; Hansen and Jensen, 2008), our sample includes a proportionate distribution of men and women to reduce any biasing effects from the sample composition. The total sampling size of the consumer and non-consumer groups complies with recommendations in literature on exploratory studies, which note that only a few additional

themes are generated beyond 40 interviews (Olson and Reynolds, 1983; Wagner, 2007). The sample size for each participant group is also in line with the literature, which suggests that 8–12 interviewees are sufficient to generate categories (Kvale, 2007; MacCracken, 1992).

3.2. Data collection and analysis

We conducted the interviews primarily over the phone, with a few exceptions in which we conducted them in person. The interviews were intended to elicit retrospective and real-time insights into motivational reasons for and against the adoption of curated retailing. We used a semi-structured set of open-ended questions that covered the (non-) consumers' motivational reasons, shopping experiences, and expectations when engaging with curated retailers. The semi-structured format allowed interviewees to add new directions of interest, which enriched the research (Mason, 2006). Interview participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was assured. The interviews lasted between 15 and 46 min each; we recorded them on tape and then transcribed them for further analysis.

Using Mayring's (2000, 2014) qualitative content analysis approach for inductive category creation, we analyzed the data by unitizing and coding each sentence to abstract codes of similar meanings out of the concrete interview material (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Ryan and Bernard, 2003). We first organized the identified codes into 1st-order concepts, then further distilled them into 2nd-order themes, and finally placed them into aggregate dimensions (Corley and Gioia, 2004; Gioia et al., 2013). The coding process was supported by the QCAmap software and included revising and refining the category system after approximately 50% of the content analysis to generate the aggregate dimensions (Krippendorff, 2013; Mayring, 2000). In the 1st-order analysis, we were careful to retain interviewee terms, but we gradually became more abstract in subsequent states, making use of the wording provided by the existing literature.

To demonstrate the links between the category induction and the
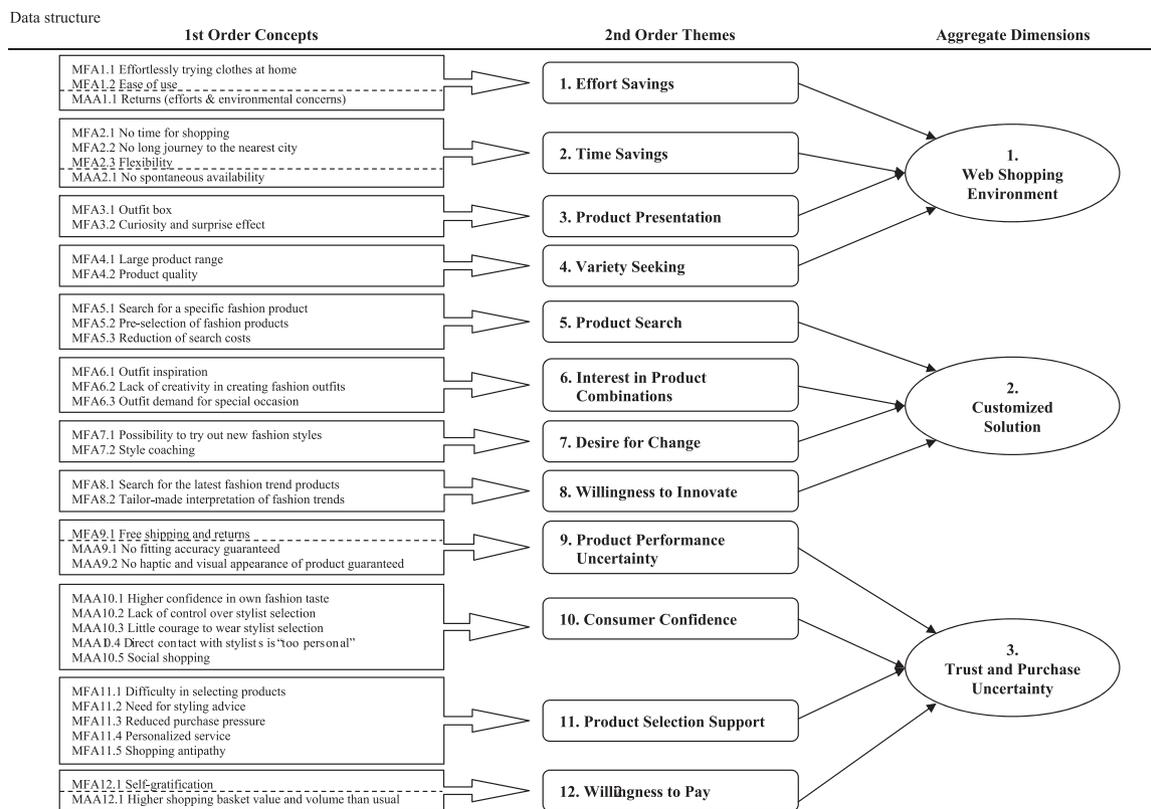
Fig. 2. Data structure. Notes: MFA = Motivations for Adoption, MAA = Motivations against Adoption.

Table 2
Frequency of motivational reasons mentioned by interview participants.

	2nd Order themes	Consumer / non-consumer							Stylist
		Female			Male				
		FC (n = 10)	FNC (n = 11)	Total (n = 21)	MC (n = 11)	MNC (n = 10)	Total (n = 21)	Total (N = 42)	S (n = 12)
Web Shopping Environment	1. Effort savings								
	MFA1.1	12	12	**24**	19	3	**22**	**46**	5
	MFA1.2	3	1	**4**	7	0	**7**	**11**	2
	MAA1.1	9	11	**20**	6	9	**15**	**35**	2
	2. Time savings								
	MFA2.1	13	13	**26**	5	1	**6**	**32**	13
	MFA2.2	6	3	**9**	2	0	**2**	**11**	2
	MFA2.3	8	5	**13**	6	2	**8**	**21**	1
	MAA2.1	8	1	**9**	2	2	**4**	**13**	3
	3. Product Presentation								
	MFA3.1	8	2	**10**	1	1	**2**	**12**	4
	MFA3.2	13	5	**18**	15	6	**21**	**39**	12
	4. Variety seeking								
	MFA4.1	5	5	**10**	3	2	**5**	**15**	1
	MFA4.2	2	3	**5**	3	1	**4**	**9**	3
Customized Solution	5. Product Search								
	MFA5.1	5	2	**7**	6	0	**6**	**13**	3
	MFA5.2	3	3	**6**	1	0	**1**	**7**	1
	MFA5.3	4	2	**6**	3	7	**10**	**16**	2
	6. Interest in Product Combinations								
	MFA6.1	11	4	**15**	10	4	**14**	**29**	10
	MFA6.2	10	2	**12**	2	0	**2**	**14**	8
	MFA6.3	15	5	**20**	2	2	**4**	**24**	11
	7. Desire for Change								
	MFA7.1	15	5	**20**	3	3	**6**	**26**	9
	MFA7.2	2	1	**3**	1	2	**3**	**6**	10
	8. Willingness to Innovate								
	MFA8.1	3	3	**6**	1	1	**2**	**8**	11
	MFA8.2	4	3	**7**	1	0	**1**	**8**	8
Trust and Purchase Uncertainty	9. Product Performance Uncertainty								
	MFA9.1	4	3	**7**	7	1	**8**	**15**	1
	MAA9.1	10	6	**16**	4	9	**13**	**29**	1
	MAA9.2	8	4	**12**	3	8	**11**	**23**	0
	10. Consumer Confidence								
	MAA10.1	7	22	**29**	3	19	**22**	**51**	0
	MAA10.2	14	8	**22**	10	12	**22**	**44**	2
	MAA10.3	0	1	**1**	5	2	**7**	**8**	7
	MAA10.4	7	10	**17**	3	6	**9**	**26**	3
	MAA10.5	4	3	**7**	0	4	**4**	**11**	0
	11. Product Selection Support								
	MFA11.1	13	5	**18**	11	2	**13**	**31**	8
	MFA11.2	22	5	**27**	8	9	**17**	**44**	16
	MFA11.3	4	4	**8**	2	0	**2**	**10**	1
	MFA11.4	10	10	**20**	5	2	**7**	**27**	6
	MFA11.5	2	6	**8**	6	4	**10**	**18**	8
	12. Willingness to Pay								
	MFA12.1	4	1	**5**	2	1	**3**	**8**	0
	MAA12.1	7	7	**14**	9	9	**18**	**32**	5

Notes: The numeric columns count the absolute frequency with which the motivational reasons are mentioned by the participant groups.

data, we assembled concepts, themes, and dimensions into a graphic data structure, including only codes appearing at least five times in one of the five participant groups in the data structure to reduce an excess of coding. Finally, we used double coding to ensure greater analytical reliability. Krippendorff's alpha (Hayes and Krippendorff, 2007; Neuendorf, 2002) for all 2nd-order themes was highly satisfactorily, ranging between 0.83 and 0.94 (see Appendix A, Table A.1). For the forthcoming discussion of our results, we primarily selected categories that provide new insights in a consulting-intensive retail context.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Reasons for and against adoption of curated fashion retailing

As Fig. 2 exemplifies, a distinct set of motivational reasons for (MFA) and against (MAA) adoption emerged from the interviews. Using these 1st-order concepts, we established three aggregate dimensions of motivational reasons, which consisted of four 2nd-order themes each: (1) web shopping environment, (2) customized solution, and (3) trust and purchase uncertainty.

Table 2 details these motivational reasons with the stated frequencies obtained from the interview data.
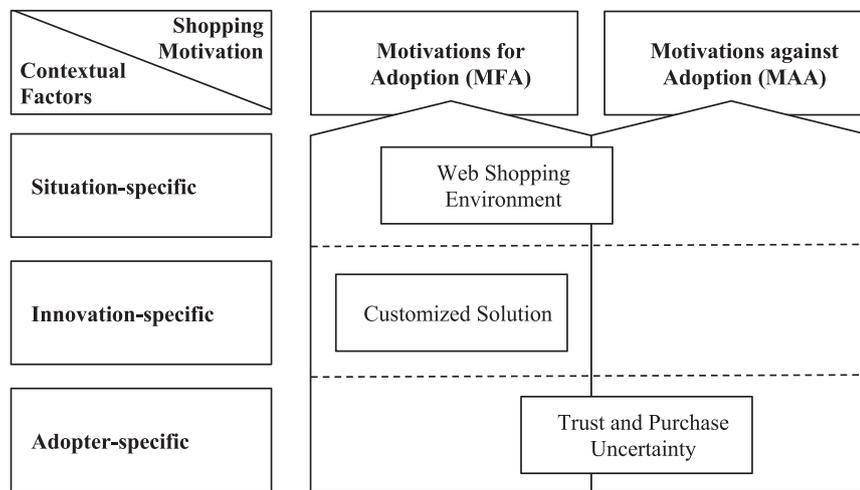
Fig. 3. The influence of contextual factors on motivational reasons.

In the following subsections, we organize our empirical findings according to the three aggregate dimensions. To highlight actual interviewee insights, we identify representative quotations at the 2nd-order level of themes. Appendix B, Tables B1–B3, presents further sample quotes per dimension.

4.1.1. Web shopping environment

In the utilitarian view, the majority of interviewees noted that it is crucial for them to buy clothing in a timely (MFA2.1), flexible (MFA2.3), and convenient (MFA1.1) manner. Many consumers elaborated on the benefits of the Web shopping environment: For example, *"it's a fitting room at home"* (MC1), and *"after just two or three clicks, the box was there a few days later"* (MC2). Consequently, effort savings and time savings together formed top motivational reasons for curated retailing adoption, thereby confirming motivational parallels to online retailing. Extant research on online shopping behavior also emphasizes this convenience and time efficiency as key antecedents of online shopping adoption (e.g., Childers et al., 2001; To et al., 2007).

For the curated retailing context, our study shows that men placed especially great importance on effortlessly trying on clothes at home (MFA1.1), whereas women appreciated the time savings aspect (MFA2.1). This finding further reinforces the literature (Noble et al., 2006) and supports the stylists' view that convenient and easy shopping was particularly important for male consumers. Interestingly, most female respondents considered shopping not as a pastime but as a necessity. We therefore conclude that women were more driven by utilitarian reasons than previous literature assumes.

In addition, a sense of curiosity and the related surprise effect (MFA3.2) represented a hedonic reason the consumer engaged in curated retailing. In the words of a female consumer: *"In the beginning, most of all, I was curious about how the service actually works, and what the stylists would suggest for me"* (FC4). Although the positively received surprising levels of the service innovation can help to attract new consumers, stylists related that many consumers – particularly young ones – tested curated retailing only once. Thus, this reason is only short-lived, purchases on a regular basis do not always follow. Last, participants' responses revealed that the likelihood of returns (MAA1.1) and the lack of spontaneous availability (MAA2.1) may prevent many consumers from making regular use of curated retailing.

4.1.2. Customized solution

"About 80% of the consumers would like outfits; for example, women say that they often have difficulty finding a top to suit their skirt." (S8)

The preceding stylist quote supports the general business logic that the demand for expert advice and personalization is one of the driving forces behind curated retailing. Interviewees from all participant groups suggested that consumers engaged with curated retailers for one or more of the following reasons: product search, interest in product combinations, or desire for change and willingness to innovate. Hence, *customized solutions* represent a distinctive and predominant motivational reason in curated retailing.

In this context, it is particularly noticeable that consumers primarily sought possibilities to try out new styles (MFA7.1) and to receive outfit inspiration (MFA6.1). Consequently, consumers expected stylists to support them in their efforts to dress tastefully while showing personal style. In the words of a male consumer: The *"intention was to think out of the box for a change, and let stylists put together a style"* (MC4). Both male and female interviewees commonly mentioned outfit inspiration (MFA6.1) and styling advice (MFA11.2). Whereas men reported experiencing the most difficulty in creating outfits, women placed greater importance on receiving advice from stylists. This result conforms with the curated retailer Outfittery (2015) commissioned study on personal shopping, performed by an independent market research institute. According to this study, for 31% of the 1035 men interviewed, the outfit creation process was a stressful experience; in contrast, 27% of the 570 female respondents enjoyed the purchase and the selection of clothing.

This difference might be partly attributable to the finding that women put greater emphasis on personalized service offerings (MFA11.4) and the possibility of trying out new styles (MFA7.1) than men do. Many stylists shared this view, though stylists perceived consumers to be more trend conscious than those who assessed themselves (MFA8.1). Drawing on Rahman et al. (2014), who argue that the more consumers are involved in fashion, the more they will adopt new fashionable clothing, the average curated retailing consumer was likely to demonstrate low to moderate fashion involvement.

In providing tailor-made solutions, curated retailers transfer the fundamental idea of solution selling to the business-to-consumer market. To date, researchers have mainly used the term "solution" in the business-to-business arena to refer to a tailor-made and integrated bundling of services and products (Davies et al., 2006; Shepherd and Ahmed, 2000). Similarly, stylists work together with the consumer to interactively design solutions. Consequently, our study indicates that integration with the consumer plays a pivotal role in customized retailing solutions. However, the non-consumer sample mentioned reasons for customized solutions far less; thus, it is reasonable to suggest that non-consumers expected stylist

consultation to create less added value.

4.1.3. Trust and purchase uncertainty

Finally, both (non-)consumers and stylists commented on product performance uncertainty, consumer confidence, product selection support, and willingness to pay as reasons for and against adopting curated retailing. In particular, consumers noted that they adopted it for easier product selection (MFA11.1) and styling advice (MFA11.2), as the following quotes summarize: *"I often have difficulty choosing things from the huge selection available online"* (MC11) and *"It broadened my horizons"* (FC1). Ironically, these quotes imply that although consumers were increasingly asking for greater product variety, some of them felt overwhelmed by choice.

Consequently, and as is also apparent in the literature on information search and salesperson consultation (Haas and Kenning, 2014; Mortimer and Pressey, 2013), purchase uncertainty represents a crucial consumer motivator in our context. In relational sales settings such as curated retailing, however, consumers are often reluctant to share personal information with salespeople (Crosby et al., 1990). In line with Haas and Kenning (2014), and contrary the predominant view in extant consultation literature, we found consumers' uncertainty to be only one among several determinants of consultation and adoption.

In addition, therefore, the data reveal that trust was a strong reason affecting the adoption of curated retailing, which depicts the pole opposite to purchase uncertainty. This finding is consistent with previous research that considers trust a vital key in e-commerce because it helps conquer perceptions of risk and uncertainty (Gefen, 2000; McKnight et al., 2002). In curated retailing particularly, stylists are the primary point of contact for the consumer. Our interviews show that, as such, they are in the position to promote or endanger trust, service quality and shopping experience. Unlike other research indicating that women value social interaction more than men do (Seock and Bailey, 2008), more female respondents considered the direct contact with stylists too personal (MAA10.4). It might be the one-to-one nature of the consulting relationship that exerted psychological buying pressure, such that many women felt forced to keep at least one product.

Continuing with the non-adoption of curated retailing, consumer confidence played a significant role, given the high number of non-consumer quotes pertaining to this topic. Non-consumers especially noted their higher confidence in their own fashion taste (MAA10.1), which prevented them from adopting curated retailing, and which might be related to their attempt to keep control over stylist selection (MAA10.2). Corroborating previous research (e.g. Clarke and Miller, 2002; Majima, 2008), this finding supports the notion that fashion shopping represents expenditures with particular personal importance, defining one's self-image and inducing feelings of social embarrassment. For instance, both men and women in our study stated that they felt less confident about the stylists' fashion sense or taste and the quality of consulting service: *"Rather than trusting salespeople, I usually prefer to rely on myself or on those who are close to me and know me and what I'm like"* (FNC3). The men interviewed noted that their higher confidence in their own fashion taste may be linked to their lower preference for trying out new fashion styles (MFA7.1) and to their greater fear of wearing the stylist's selection (MAA10.3), compared with women. The high consumer confidence we noted among women interviewed can be explained by their typically higher levels of fashion involvement.

Surprisingly, not a single stylist mentioned this particular reason against adoption (MAA10.1). Overall, stylists rarely mentioned consumer confidence–related reasons. Instead, they highlighted product selection support as a strong motivation for adoption, suggesting that consumers usually require their reassurance and guidance when shopping.

4.2. Implications for retailers

Our study revealed a wide range of motivational reasons, grouped in three aggregate dimensions: (1) web shopping environment, (2) customized solutions, and (3) trust and purchase uncertainty. From a curated fashion retailer standpoint, these results have important implications.

First, only retailers who comprehend the complex nature of motivational reasons are in a position to create value to their consumers (Davis and Hodges, 2012). Therefore, retailers must particularly acknowledge motivations against adoption. Their free outfit advice can generate sustainable profit only if they succeed in increasing the consumer's loyalty and shopping-basket value by significantly mitigating negative reasons.

To this end, second, it is essential to consider that motivational reasons can vary according to gender. Though our study's focus is exploratory, and thus not sufficient to reliably evaluate gender differences and speak to their moderating influence in curated retailing, we regard gender as a promising avenue for future research. From a managerial standpoint, a better understanding of gender-related differences can aid retailers in more effective customer targeting. Indeed, the existing curated retailing practice reveals that gender might have played a role in strategic orientation from the beginning: All pioneering curated retailers have limited their target group to one gender first (e.g. Modomoto, Outfittery, Stitch Fix, Trunk Club), and only the latter two retailers have now expanded their service to both genders. Moreover, many of these retailers exploit gender-related aspects for communication purposes; for example, Outfittery advertises with the slogan "Shopping for men."

Beyond that, it is particularly important to address the influence of contextual factors on motivational reasons. Recent research establishes that consumers' adoption decision depends on factors related to the situation, innovation, and person (e.g., Talke and Heidenreich, 2014; Wejnert, 2002). In line with Talke and Heidenreich (2014), we therefore conceptualize the 1st-order concepts from the web shopping environment as situation-specific reasons, from customized solution as innovation-specific reasons, and from trust and purchase uncertainty as adopter-specific reasons (Fig. 3).

As shown in Fig. 3, the web shopping environment dimension is situation specific, and thus, curated retailers do not have a unique characteristic on which to differentiate themselves from online retailers. Moreover, considerable research already addresses consumers' preference for convenient online shopping (e.g., Brashear et al., 2009; Ganesh et al., 2010); therefore, this situation-specific dimension reflects little new insight worth discussing. Nevertheless, from an operations standpoint, it is important to be aware that returns and environmental concerns as well as the lack of spontaneous availability (customers must wait two to three weeks for outfit box delivery) were common reasons against adoption. Consequently, retailers must consider how to make the service more environmentally friendly (e.g., send fewer items physically), and how to create a fast-lane process.

Above all, the crucial difference between curated retailing and common online retailing lies in the provision of customized solutions. To the best of our knowledge, this reason has not yet been a focus of past motivational studies in retailing. In particular, this move toward offering solutions in retailing reflects the consumer shift to delegate activities to the retailer and to access its knowledge (Lovelock and Gummesson, 2004). Stylists become consultants in that consumers do not buy fashion but rather solutions to the challenge of dressing to reflect personal style. Importantly, and as Fig. 3 indicates, this reason is innovation-specific and therefore under retailers' control. For retailers, this finding implies the necessity of identifying consumer reasons and problems at an early stage to understand their role in the solution process. To illustrate, stylist respondents perceived themselves as trend

coaches, but the majority of consumer respondents did not pursue trends and did not want to be coached accordingly. Stylists should therefore be more careful not to burden consumers with the most fashionable clothing.

With respect to understanding such reasons against adoption, the trust and purchase uncertainty dimensions are particularly important, though these dimensions are difficult to influence because they predominantly mirror enduring consumer characteristics. However, curated retailing requires consumers to change their shopping habits, so retailers must cultivate high levels of trust in their stylists. Once there is sufficient trust, ideally even critical consumers would hand over the responsibility for finding products and share even tacit knowledge.

To do so, retailers should harmonize marketing communications, consumer targeting activities, and stylist trainings with motivational reasons. A suggesting for marketing would be communicating the option of an outfit preview to increase consumer control, for instance. Moreover, consumers should be targeted by communicating less on tailor-made interpretation of fashion trends and instead more on outfit and style inspiration, and personalized service. Furthermore, stylist training should focus on sensitizing them to the importance of adjusting their sales tactics to consumers' unique reasons for adopting the service.

5. Conclusions, limitations, and future research

This study deepens understanding of a unique service innovation in the modern retailing environment: curated retailing. By investigating what motivates (non-) consumers to welcome styling help or not, it offers new evidence for the discussion on motivational reasons for and against adopting curated retailing. Moreover, we provide further evidence on the influence of contextual factors on motivational reasons in retailing. Our analysis identifies a variety of motivational reasons, and we distilled them into three aggregate dimensions: (1) web shopping environment, (2) customized solutions, and (3) trust and purchase uncertainty. These results allow us to not merely support but also to broaden existing knowledge in traditional and online retailing. Specifically, we find that in fashion, providing customized solutions represents a key reason for adopting curated retailing, while trust and purchase uncertainty are crucial to better understand the reasons

against adoption. Thus, we posit that customized solutions represent the central reason for adopting curated retailing. Our results may also have implications for research on other inspiration- and consultation-driven sectors in retailing, for example, cosmetics or furniture. In such areas of application, it is reasonable to conclude that consumers want curated retailers to provide solutions tailored to their needs. Following an integrated multi-channel approach, curated retailing will provide many opportunities for traditional brick-and-mortar retailers as well. In the future, personalized experiences and customized solutions will be critical differentiators in all retail formats.

To conclude, however, our study is limited to a single research context, and our results depend on the specific design of the curated retailing offer; therefore, it should be considered exploratory. Future empirical evidence from other product categories and from cultural settings other than Germany would allow more generalization. Another limitation is the study's qualitative nature, due to semi-structured interviews. Consequently, future research should test our results applying a quantitative approach together with a broader sampling. As stated earlier, for instance, investigating whether gender has a moderating role on the motivational reasons found here can build better understanding of consumer behavior in this context. Above all, clustering consumers according to similarity of their motivational reasons to identify the most profitable consumer segments might aid retailers in targeting the right consumers. Moreover, and as indicated previously, we suggested the importance of customized solutions in curated retailing. Future research could analyze the varying roles and customized solution approaches of stylists, and further evidence from other solution contexts would increase both theoretical and managerial value.

Acknowledgments

Appendix A. Inter-coder reliability

See Table A.1.

Table A.1
Calculating inter-coder reliability using Krippendorff's alpha.

2nd Order themes	Alpha
1. Effort savings	0.93
2. Time savings	0.94
3. Product Presentation	0.84
4. Variety seeking	0.85
5. Product Search	0.83
6. Interest in Product Combinations	0.92
7. Desire for Change	0.85
8. Willingness to Innovate	0.84
9. Product Performance Uncertainty	0.85
10. Consumer Confidence	0.90
11. Product Selection Support	0.93
12. Willingness to Pay	0.92

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