

A Review of Offline and Online Brand Presence Measures

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis presents work carried out by myself and does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; and all substantive contributions by others to the work presented, including jointly authored publications, is clearly acknowledged.

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Abstract

Physical availability (i.e., making a brand easy to find and buy for as many consumers as possible) is one of the key aspects for sustainable brand growth (Sharp 2010b). There are three components of physical availability: presence (i.e., the brand being present in a wide range of buying situations), prominence (i.e., brand being easy to find in various shopping environments) and portfolio (i.e., concerns whether the brand offers something relevant for various buying situations or occasions) (Nenycz-Thiel et al. 2016, 2017). This thesis focuses on the presence element of physical availability justified by the fact that presence is a prerequisite to ascertaining the prominence and portfolio and that it is easier to track and measure.

The marketing literature has extensively researched physical availability and brand presence. However, it has referred to it with many different concepts and measures such as market coverage, retail distribution, push and pull marketing, and depth and breadth distribution (Ailawadi & Farris 2017; Olver & Farris 1989). A lack of consensus in conceptualisation and measurement of focal concepts of theoretical and managerial relevance can cause confusion and misunderstanding (Aaker 1996a; Ailawadi & Farris 2017; Reibstein & Farris 1995). The issue is particularly noticeable in research on brand presence in online domains, which is primarily confined to industry sources (Boyle n.d.; Chen 2021; Spence 2020; Swift 2020; York 2020), rather than scholarly academic research. Moreover, there is limited information on how to conceptualise and evaluate brand presence in specific *online domains*, such as e-commerce (i.e., buying and selling products or services over the Internet (Tokareva 2018)), m-commerce (i.e., buying and selling through a mobile device (Tokareva 2018)) and social commerce (i.e., using social networking sites to promote and sell goods and services (Chaffey 2019)). The lack of guidance on how to understand and appraise physical availability across these growing and ever changing aspects creates further confusion, expanding the divide between marketing theory and practice.

Past research has presented frameworks (Ailawadi & Farris 2017) or lists (Farris et al. 2016; Farris et al. 2010) of existing definitions and measures of physical availability, albeit not necessarily focusing on the brand presence element of it. There is also no evidence to suggest the information reported in these studies was gathered through a systematic

review of marketing literature or based on a direct appraisal of managers' views. Additionally, these studies did not delineate and compare the offline and online domains.

To address these issues, this thesis includes two studies:

Study 1 is a systematic literature review (SLR) conducted to identify existing offline and online brand presence measures. A SLR is a scientific, robust and unbiased approach to gather sources and understand a field of research (Aria & Cuccurullo 2017; Fetscherin & Heinrich 2015; Tranfield et al. 2003). A total of 172 bibliometric sources (including journal articles, conference papers and industry publications) was examined to create an inventory of offline and online brand presence measures, including a list of equivalent measures (i.e., measures that can comfortably be used to understand brand presence in online and offline domains). The consolidated inventory of terms, definitions and measures included 12 offline brand presence measures and 21 online brand presence measures, four of which overlapped.

Study 2 is based on the results of an online survey targeting over 50 marketing practitioners from different consumer good categories and countries. The survey examined respondents' awareness, use and perceived level of usefulness of the measures identified in Study 1. The results indicated high levels of managerial awareness for all offline and online presence measures; however, comparatively respondents used more offline brand presence measures than online measures. Respondents also rated all brand presence measures identified as highly useful, with frequency of monitoring being higher for the online measures and great reliance of third-party services and tools (e.g., Nielsen market research services and Google analytics). Another important finding from Study 2 was the identification of an additional seven offline and two online measures, which did not emerge in Study 1.

Combined, the outcomes of these two studies yield the following implications for theory and practice. The inventory of offline and online brand presence measures this thesis created can assist academics and practitioners to find, evaluate and compare indicators of this important driver of brand growth 'all in one place'. Besides forming an epistemological base for future research endeavours on the topic, the list can guide managers to

understand and track brand presence in different domains, adding confidence to multi-channel (interacting with customers through different channels) and omni-channel (a cohesive shopping experience across all the brand's sales touchpoints) practices (Ailawadi & Farris 2017; Herhausen et al. 2015; Neslin et al. 2006; Verhoef et al. 2015).