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# An omnichannel approach to retailing: demystifying and identifying the factors influencing an omnichannel experience

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to identify the factors that influence an omnichannel experience. Omnichannel is an emerging approach to retailing that responds to the changing nature of how customers shop in alternation between online and offline shops, and the increasing use of digital devices (e.g. smartphones and tablets), as a consequence retailers are focusing and establishing a seamless integrated approach to their services. Omnichannel is now a hot topic in retailing but there is a lack of empirical studies into the factors that influence an omnichannel experience. Using a mixed methods approach, we propose and empirically test a conceptual model that identifies four factors influencing an omnichannel experience: brand familiarity; customisation; perceived value, and technology readiness. We conceptualise omnichannel to include three key channels; in-store, online and mobile. Two hundred and forty-six questionnaires were collected and analysed using PLS-SEM and 11 interviews were carried out with marketing/ omnichannel professionals. Our results indicate that brand familiarity has a strong influence on omnichannel (in-store, online and mobile) while perceived value has a negative impact on the mobile experience. Our results show that retailers need to consider multiple factors, such as brand familiarity, customisation, perceived value and technology readiness as influencing factors of an omnichannel experience, and plan the use of multiple touchpoints simultaneously to enhance their overall customer's experience. Although this study demonstrates the significant factors influencing an omnichannel experience, questions remain regarding the exact use of each touchpoint by customers and the extent of overlap between the touchpoints. which .

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## KEYWORDS

Omnichannel; customer experience; brand familiarity; customisation; perceived value; technology readiness

## Introduction

In recent years there has been a notable increase in customers shopping online rather than in physical shops; it can be seen that online shopping is now dominating retail growth (Hsiao, Yen, and Li 2012). This has resulted in new types of retail channels and touchpoints that influence customers' behaviour. Shopping on smartphones and tablets

has achieved significant growth, in 2017 34% of all e-retail sales were made on a mobile device, this is predicted to grow to 54% in 2021 (Statista 2018). Retail research (2018) reports that during 2017, online and mobile channels to market represented over £77bn of transactions, which was an increase of more than 11.5% over 2016. Smartphones have revolutionised shopping, with the use of mobile apps, location targeted offers and scan-and-go technologies (Grewal, Roggeveen, and Nordfält 2017).

In response to this growth online and subsequent change of customer behaviour, the concept of omnichannel management started from a practitioners' perspective (Rigby 2011). Omnichannel is as a new method to enhance customers' shopping experience and overcome any shortcomings of a multichannel approach to retailing. Omnichannel is defined as 'the synergetic management of the numerous available channels and customer touchpoints, in such a way that the customer experience across channels and the performance over channels is optimized' (Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman 2015, 176). An omnichannel approach to retailing takes a broader perspective on channel integration and how this affects customers' choice and purchase behaviours.

Since customers expect a seamless, consistent experience across all channels, having a multichannel presence and strategy is, however, not enough. The omnichannel approach integrates customer experience and focuses on all customer interactions with an organisation through a customer's lens (Yrjölä, Spence, and Saarijärvi 2018). The omnichannel approach also places greater emphasis on the integration between the digital and traditional channels (Beck and Rygl 2015; Picot-Coupey, Huré, and Piveteau 2016).

There is a scarcity of research examining an omnichannel approach to retailing and how this affects the customer experience (Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman 2015; Ye, Lau, and Teo 2018). By identifying the factors that influence omnichannel adoption by customers, we can address the shortcoming in the literature by proposing and testing a hypothesised model for omnichannel experience in retailing from the perspective of customers. We contribute to the empirical omnichannel literature by providing further insight into the impact of four key factors influencing an omnichannel experience. We investigate the customer's experience across online, in-store and mobile channels from a customer's viewpoint on how these channels are influenced in a retail shopping environment.

## **From multichannel to omnichannel**

Given the changing shopper patterns, multichannel shopping is where customers use multiple channels such as online or mobile devices to purchase products or services (Zhang et al. 2010). The literature illustrates that a retailer's multichannel approach could enhance customers' satisfaction and increase loyalty (Wallace, Giese, and Johnson 2004). Retailers that utilise a multichannel approach often generate greater sales and profit in comparison to a single-channel approach (Huang, Lu and Ba 2016; Zhang et al. 2010). Where customers shop across multiple product categories there is a greater propensity to make purchases via multichannel and they are more likely to migrate to a new channel. However, that channel might deliver a different experience for the customer (Kumar and Venkatesan 2005).

Multichannel retailing considers channels such as online and in-store, but often these retail channels are managed and accounted for separately (Neslin and Shankar 2009). It should be noted that there is a distinction between multiple channels and channel

integration (Friedman and Furey 2003). Neslin and Shankar (2009) posit that the multi-channel research hitherto has focussed on the growth of online channels, not the integration of the channels. Retailers have developed and managed the channels separately with limited integration (Saghiri et al. 2017). Omnichannel includes integrating cross-channel objectives with the lens being on the customer and brand rather than a retail channel or sales focus (Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman 2015). The focal point of omnichannel management is integrating the channels, thus providing customers with a seamless retail experience (Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman 2015; Yrjölä, Spence, and Saarijärvi 2018). Although channel integration has become the cornerstone of marketing strategies, putting such an approach into practice remains a major challenge for retailers (Melero, Sese, and Verhoef 2016).

Different retail channels are now interchangeable as customers are using multiple channels in a seamless way (Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman 2015), as it is simpler for them to move between channels at any point. This has led academic research to highlight the importance of considering customer experience and ensuring a consistent method to drive a more positive experience (Melis et al. 2015). Gallino and Moreno (2014) argue that customers often view the organisation as one entity, regardless of how many channels they use, hence retailers should adopt a consistent approach. Despite the number of channels or the methods of their integration, retailers should keep sight of customer experience and seek to integrate the customer experience across all channels to reduce conflicts and difficulties in integrating their processes (Kim, Park, and Pookulangara 2005). Integrating this experience across all channels allows for a consistent and seamless customer experience (Steinfeld and Harry Bouwman 2002), which empowers the customer with more self-control to shop (Zhang et al. 2018). This study investigates the customer's experience across different channels to identify factors that influence the omnichannel experience.

### **Omnichannel approach to retailing: definition and constituent dimensions**

Following interviews with a range of marketing professionals, including a leading omnichannel agency in London, the three main channels identified are online, mobile and in-store. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) argue that there are more touchpoints with customers, including direct marketing, telephone and traditional media, and understanding the customer journey is of importance. Also, understanding the elements of customer experience touchpoints was highlighted by Stein and Ramaseshan (2016). Their research highlighted the effect of customer-to-customer and employee-to-customer interactions as important touchpoints that could affect an experience within a channel. We recognise there are multiple touchpoints that can affect a customer's experience. For this research, online, mobile and in-store are the three principal channels investigated.

Mobile technology has seen dramatic growth in customer usage, which has had a disruptive effect on online retailing (Einav et al. 2014). As an effect of this growth 'more e-commerce websites are providing mobile shopping services that enable their consumers to access their products and services through an additional online channel' (Huang et al. 2016, 265). The flexibility, ease of use and mobility motivate customers to better understand mobile shopping and improve ease of use perception (Hubert et al. 2017). Both Einav et al. (2014) and Huang, Lu and Bal (2016) identify retailer's initiatives to

adapt their e-commerce to m-commerce. With the need to have a competitive multi-channel approach (Zhang et al. 2010), retailers have attempted to take advantage of mobile capabilities, such as convenience, accessibility, security and optimisation (Tseng and Yazdanifard 2015), to create a positive online experience (Huang Lu and Ba 2016; Pantano and Priporas 2016).

Research undertaken by IBM, globally, found that 78% of the respondents identified themselves as digital device adopters, with customers increasingly shopping via multi-channels and using mobile devices (Berman and Kesterson-Townes 2012). Several retailers are reporting that 70–80% of the website browsing occurs through mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets. Online retail sales in 2016 increased by 16.7%, from the previous year, with a total e-commerce spend online of £182bn in Europe. The major growth of online sales in retail is underpinned by the use of mobile devices. In the UK 35.6% of the mobile sales occurred and it is expected that 89.2% of the mobile purchases online will occur in Europe during 2015–2017 (Anon 2018). The technological advances in mobile devices enable customers to instantly access and download information, make purchases online and engage in online services (Rose, Hair, and Clark 2011).

We contend that omnichannel is an integral part of the customer experience because it is concerned with all customer interactions with a retailer from a holistic perspective. When a retailer adopts an omnichannel approach they can integrate the customer experience both online and offline through each of the touchpoints with their customers.

Table 1 provides an overview of the key literature surrounding omnichannel and multichannel retailing. The analysis of the literature shows that there is a lack of academic research into understanding about the factors that influence an omnichannel experience. The focal point of most of the literature to date has been on the multichannel approach to retailing or from a channel management, supply chain focus, as identified by Galipoglu et al. (2018).

The research available identifies the challenges retailers face when adopting channel integration and forming an omnichannel approach. However, the omnichannel research is predominantly conceptual in nature and highlights the lack of research into what drives an omnichannel experience (Ye, Lau, and Teo 2018). By integrating channels, retailers need to deliver a consistent, seamless experience across all touchpoints (Picot-Coupey, Huré, and Piveteau 2016). The latest, limited omnichannel literature focuses on distribution and supply chain related issues rather than the customer's experience and what drives an omnichannel experience (Saghiri et al. 2017; Ye, Lau, and Teo 2018; Cao and Li 2015). There are limited empirical studies within the omnichannel literature and none specifically that investigate the factors that influence the omnichannel experience.

## Conceptual framework

Underpinned by a review of the literature, our conceptual framework (see Figure 1) proposes that four constructs act as the factors that influence omnichannel: brand familiarity, customisation, perceived channel value, and technology readiness. We posit that retailers need to establish a greater understanding of these antecedents to manage their omnichannel more effectively. Furthermore, we suggest that omnichannel is not one entity, but it is an integration of multiple channels, and we argue the seamless combination of these channels is the omnichannel. We recognise there are multiple touchpoints

**Table 1.** Overview of Omnichannel literature.

Author(s)	Context	Type of study	Relationship to omnichannel
Barwitz and Maas (2018)	Omnichannel	Empirical	Identifies an understanding of what drives customers' interaction choices along the customer journey, motives for a customer journey and channel choice and investigates the value-in-use customers seek in interactions with a company.
Cao and Li (2015)	Multichannel Omnichannel	Conceptual	Investigation into cross-channel integration in US retail companies indicate that retailers' IT capabilities and private-label provision drive their cross-channel integration.
Galipoglu et al. (2018)	Omnichannel	Conceptual	From undertaking a comprehensive literature review on omnichannel and logistics/supply chain this study highlights the lack of research in this area.
Yrjölä, Spence, and Saarjäarvi (2018)	Omnichannel	Conceptual	Identifies how multi, cross and omnichannel CVPs differ in terms of how they create value to customers.
Ye, Lau, and Teo (2018)	Omnichannel	Empirical	Highlights the lack of research on drivers of an omnichannel experience, adds to the literature to identify drivers from a marketing, logistics and supply chain perspective. Customer service and product innovativeness highlighted as part of an omnichannel success but many barriers such as IT, resources and supply chain not being centralised can cause problems.
Yrjölä, Spence, and Saarjäarvi (2018).	Omnichannel	Conceptual	The omnichannel environment enables the retailer to facilitate customers' value by creating processes throughout their consumption journey. The authors propose 5 propositions to facilitate the decision-making process and adding value to the customers journey. Customer satisfaction and trust are influences by this empowerment.
Zhang et al. (2018)	Omnichannel	Empirical	Results find that consumer perceptions of channel integration have a positive relationship with consumer empowerment. In an omnichannel environment, consumers are empowered with more self-control to shop.
Ailawadi and Farris (2017)	Multichannel Omnichannel	Conceptual	Identifies the growing capabilities and importance of mobile that has accelerated implementation of omnichannel strategies by retailers. There is an increased pressure on suppliers to adopt and adapt by integrating across their channels.
Grewal, Roggeveen, and Nordfalt (2017)	Customer experience	Conceptual	This article focuses on "The Future of Retailing" by highlighting five key areas that are moving the field forward: (1) technology and tools to facilitate decision making, (2) visual display and merchandise offer decisions, (3) consumption and engagement, (4) big data collection and usage, and (5) analytics and profitability.
Hubert et al. (2017)	Multichannel	Empirical	Results demonstrate that several acceptance predictors are associated with ease of use and usefulness, which in turn affect intentional and behavioural outcomes. They posit that flexibility and mobility motivate customers to better understand mobile shopping and improve ease of use perception.
Saghiri et al. (2017).	Omnichannel	Conceptual	This paper develops a conceptual framework for omnichannel systems, configured by three dimensions of channel stage, channel type and channel agent. The researchers highlight the gap in the omni literature, aiming to fulfil this deficiency with a conceptual holistic omnichannel theoretical framework.
Bezes (2016)	Multichannel	Empirical	Identifies customers perceived risks associated between online and offline purchases. Their findings support that customers' familiarity with the channel seems to make them more vigilant.
Huang, Lu and Ba(2016)	Multichannel	Empirical	Results indicate that after the adoption of a mobile channel, the purchases on the web channel were slightly cannibalised, however, the consumers' purchases increased overall. Suggesting that the positive synergy effect of the new channel overrode the negative cannibalisation effect.

(Continued)



Table 1. (Continued).

Author(s)	Context	Type of study	Relationship to omnichannel
Lemon and Verhoef (2016)	Customer experience Multichannel	Conceptual	Identifies the latest research in customer experience and types of touch points in the customer's journey. Highlights a research agenda for customer experience, the mapping of a customer's journey across multichannel platforms including mobile and touchpoints.
Pantano and Priporas (2016)	Customer experience	Empirical	Highlights the increased movement from e-channels to mobile channel and identifies consumer experience creates value for consumers, by saving them time, money, supporting their lifestyle, offering security in transactions, and offering quality collection services, which act as drivers of consumer behaviour.
Picot-Coupey, Huré, and Piveteau (2016)	Multichannel Omnichannel	Empirical	Highlights the challenges in shifting from a multichannel to Omnichannel strategy. They highlighted the priority challenge becomes more development-related in order to achieve synchronisation across touch points. In particular, the various systems (logistics, information, sales, marketing, training, product management) have to be unified.
Baxendale, Macdonald, and Wilson (2015)	Multichannel	Empirical	Examines the impact on change in brand consideration of six broad touchpoints: brand advertising; retailer advertising; in-store communications; peer-to-peer conversation; traditional earned media; and peer observation. Also, examines the roles of both touchpoint frequency and touchpoint positivity in forming this impact. This contributes to multichannel literature and brand choice.
Beck and Rygl (2015)	Multichannel Omnichannel	Conceptual	This article proposes a categorisation of multi, cross and omnichannel retailing by means of a literature review. Defines "Omnichannel retailing is the set of activities involved in selling merchandise or services through all widespread channels, whereby the customer can trigger full channel interaction and/or the retailer controls full channel integration." (p. 175)
Melis et al. (2015)	Multichannel	Conceptual	Identifies the drivers of multichannel shoppers' on online store choice decisions. Supports familiarity as a driver of online choice. The offline experience is important when a customer starts to shop in a new online channel but once familiar this is less important. Supports that the offline and online needs to be consistent for the customer's experience.
Pauwels and Neslin (2015)	Multichannel	Empirical	Develops a multichannel framework examining the impact of channel additions. Introducing a new in-store channel did not cannibalise online sales as much as catalogue sales. Increasing channel choice increases revenues.
Rapp et al. (2015)	Multichannel	Empirical	Investigates the effect of showrooming and multichannel retailing on salesperson self-efficacy and performance. Showrooming is associated with decreased salesperson performance. Highlights the importance of training staff to cross-sell
Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman (2015)	Multichannel	Conceptual	Highlights the differences between multichannel and omnichannel approaches and calls for further research in omnichannel and customer experience and the customer's journey.
Gallino and Moreno (2014)	Omnichannel Multichannel	Empirical	Highlights the growing trend of the integration of channels (specifically buying online then picking up in store). Results imply the evaluation of a multichannel strategy should be performed in a holistic way. Their results show that customers clearly see the company as one entity and not two separate businesses (online vs offline).
Avery et al. (2012)	Multichannel	Empirical	Proposes a conceptual framework of the effects of introducing a new channel (bricks and mortar) and how channels can cannibalise or grow sales across different channels. Highlights the importance of having a brick and mortar store to drive sales and new customers.
Rose et al. (2012)	Customer experience	Empirical	Highlights the differences between online and offline, the way the information is provided is different; the online context enables very rich provision of information, whereas face to face may be more limited.

(Continued)



Table 1. (Continued).

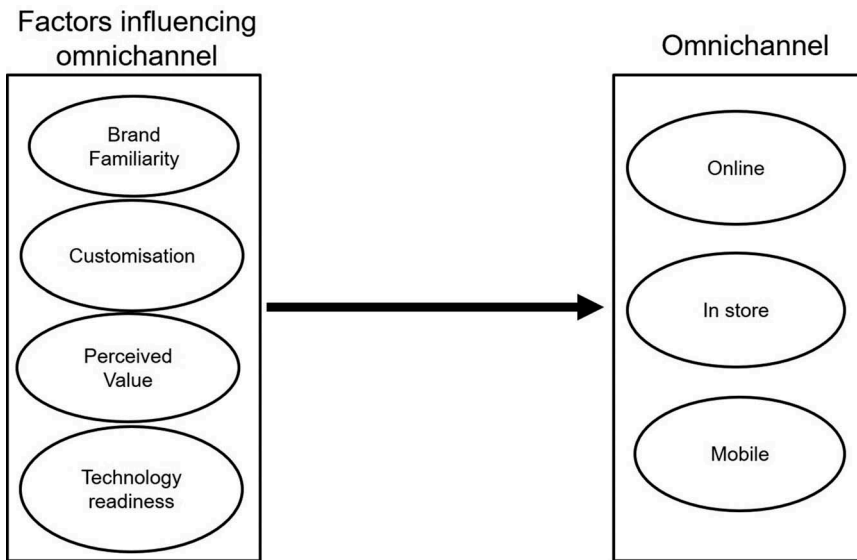
Author(s)	Context	Type of study	Relationship to omnichannel
Rose, Hair, and Clark (2011)	Customer experience online	Conceptual	Proposed a framework suggesting that an outcome of a positive OCE is customer satisfaction an intention to re-purchase from a website. The degree of personal contact can range from intensive face to face context to non-existent online. The way the information is provided is different; the online context enables very rich provision of information, whereas face to face may be more limited.
Lemke, Clark, and Wilson (2011)	Customer experience	Conceptual	Validates that customers construe experience quality and not just product or service quality and assess their experience holistically. Customer experience quality includes an assessment not just of communication and service quality but also of usage quality.
Ganesh et al. (2010)	Multichannel	Empirical	Highlights there are more similarities than differences among traditional and online customers. There are core factors that influence shopping irrespective of formats. Points of distinction for e-stores: 1. interactivity and the ability to offer personalised services. 2. ability to redefine convenience. 3. ability to control their website content.
Constantinides, Lorenzo-Romero, and Gómez (2010)	Customer experience	Empirical	The research found many similarities in the way e-users from both countries consider how the web experience factors affect their decisions. Familiarity with the online purchase dimension is not a relevant dimension affecting the consumer's preferences to choose a virtual store. Given that an online consumer is not simply a shopper, but also an information technology user, one could argue that the online experience is a more complex issue than the physical shopping experience.
Zhang et al. (2010)	Multichannel.	Conceptual	Retailers tend to manage channels separately which causes conflicts. Companies need to analyse data they have about their customers to understand how they behave across channels. Multichannel strategies must adopt a customer-centric approach (supporting Verhoef et al. 2009)
Verhoef et al. (2009)	Customer experience multichannel	Conceptual	Acknowledges multichannel experiences – one channel experience might affect another. Argue that prior customer experiences can influence future customer experiences. The model includes situational moderators such as the type of store, location that could impact the customer's experience.
Grewal, Levy, and Kumar (2009)	Customer experience	Conceptual	This paper highlights the importance of customer experience in retail and identifies the macro factors e.g. promotions, price, merchandise, supply chain and location to deliver a superior customer experience that results in higher customer satisfaction. "Customer experience includes every point of contact at which the customer interacts with the business, product, or service" (p.1).
Hahn and Kim (2009)	Multichannel	Empirical	A customer's trust with an online retailer was found to be a significant predictor of internet confidence and search intention in the multichannel retail environment trust.
Cassab and MacLachlan (2009)	Multichannel	Conceptual	This research posits that a customer's evaluation of a multichannel service interface has a strong influence on trust and trust has a positive effect on commitment, thus enhancing customer loyalty. "The perception of a higher degree of interaction as represented by the key multi-channel service variables is shown to be associated with greater customer trust to organisations that make the interaction seamless across customer touch points" (p. 66).
Neslin and Shankar (2009)	Multichannel	Empirical	Channel-based customer segmentation is advisable. Customers have different preferences for channel usage and inertia affects their channel choices. Multichannel availability may enhance loyalty.

(Continued)



**Table 1.** (Continued).

Author(s)	Context	Type of study	Relationship to omnichannel
Kukar-Kinney, Ridgway, and Montroe (2009)	Customer experience online	Empirical	When customer's compulsive buying needs increased, they are more motivated to buy online compared to in-store. The motivation is stemmed from being anonymous online and avoids social interaction whilst shopping plus the positive feelings associated with shopping online. Retailers should develop exciting and interactive sites to stimulate positive feelings.
Verhoef, Neslin, and Vroomen (2007)	Multichannel	Empirical	There is a mutual relationship between attitudes towards searching and purchasing in a channel – channel lock-in. If there is a lack of channel lock-in – cross channel synergy. Findings conclude that Internet-store research shopping by managing channel lock-in and cross-channel synergy.
Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Malhotra (2005)	Customer experience	Empirical	Concludes that efficiency and fulfilment are the most crucial and important dimensions for website service quality. These dimensions had the strongest influence on overall quality perceptions and perceived value and loyalty intentions.
Schoenbachler & Gordon (2002)	Multichannel	Conceptual	The model proposes that the more familiar the customer is with internet brand or company, the lower the perceived risk. Customers channel preferences must be researched to understand their behaviours and the multichannel buyers. The focus must be on the customer and design channel alternatives to satisfy their needs.
Novak, Hoffman, and Yung (2000)	Customer experience	Empirical	Website design must provide for enough challenge to arouse the consumer but not too much to be frustrated through navigating the site and logs off. Engaging customers online will arouse excitement. If the site does provide enough challenges for action, customers will become bored and log off. A compelling online customer experience is positively correlated with fun, recreational and experiential uses of the web, expected use of the web in the future and the amount of time consumers spend online.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework.

and channels that a customer can interact with a retailer; from drawing the arguments together, we conceptualise omnichannel as online, in-store and mobile.

## Antecedents of omnichannel

### *Relationship between brand familiarity and an omnichannel experience*

Park and Stoel (2005, 150) define brand familiarity as 'the number of brand-related direct or indirect experiences that have been accrued by the consumer'. Hoch and Deighton (1989) posit that brand familiarity directly relates to the amount of time customers spend processing information about the brand, while earlier Baker et al. (1986) noted that this was regardless of the type or content of the processing involved. The benefits of establishing brand familiarity stem from the assumption that consumers are more likely to purchase familiar brands over non familiar ones (Park and Stoel 2005). Brand familiarity is the antecedent to intention to buy the brand through the high level of confidence toward the brand (Laroche, Kim, and Zhou 1996). Bezes (2016) finds that the more familiar the customer is with a channel, the more vigilant.

Customers find it easier to retrieve and store information and demonstrate less effort in processing information about familiar brands (Dahlén and Lange 2004). Research indicates that brand familiarity reduces the need for information search, as illustrated by Biswas's (1992) study which highlights that customers tend to spend less time shopping for a familiar brand than they do for an unfamiliar brand. Familiarity also appears as a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for the development of expertise and the ability to perform product-related tasks successfully (Ha and Perks 2005). Ultimately, brand familiarity is crucial when creating more awareness around the brand, which can elicit more favourable responses towards them (Delgado-Ballester, Navarro, and Sicilia 2012), and impact upon a customer's decision to purchase (Lin 2013).

Delgado-Ballester, Navarro, and Sicilia (2012) suggest that sending out consistent messages that excite customers about the brand is important in building brand familiarity. Raymond, Fenske, and Westoby (2005) argued that too much familiarity with a brand could lead to a decrease in the liking of them due to overexposure. Moreover, if there is a positive perception of the brand, the feelings of satisfaction or trust will be greater than if there is a negative perception of the brand (Ha and Perks 2005). Keller (2003) puts forward the notion that brand familiarity can reduce a customer's perceived risk when deciding whether to purchase from an organisation. However, Pauwels et al. (2016) results indicate that when a brand is unfamiliar it must use multiple channels to build brand equity as online only is not effective.

Schoenbachler and Gordon (2002) argue that to successfully promote a brand in a multichannel environment there must be a consistent brand image across all channels. Although there is sparse research on brand familiarity across different channels, our research identifies brand familiarity as an antecedent to an omnichannel experience and we argue that:

H<sub>1</sub>: brand familiarity has a positive effect on an omnichannel experience:

H<sub>1a</sub>: brand familiarity has a positive effect on online experience.

H<sub>1b</sub>: brand familiarity has a positive effect on in-store experience.

H<sub>1c</sub>: brand familiarity has a positive effect on mobile experience.

### ***Relationship between customisation and an omnichannel experience***

Marketing messages should be customer-focused (Klaus and Maklan 2013) and retailers need to calculate customer profitability by segmenting their customers and drive customised messages (Kumar, Petersen, and Leone 2010). Perceived customisation refers to the extent to which the responses of communicative information systems are perceived as appropriate or personally relevant to a user's communicative behaviours (Lee et al. 2015). Customisation in retail integrates customer data with the use of advanced customer analytics to provide insight and enhance the customer experience (Parise, Guinan, and Kafka 2016). The earlier work by Coelho and Henseler (2012) supports these findings by indicating that customising the service delivery will lead to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The stimuli from digital technology through any channel can influence customers' behaviour due to interactivity. Liang et al. (2011) support these findings and argue that customisation leads to a positive customer attitude to the brand because they feel valued by the company. Avery et al. (2012) also advocate the importance of keeping a consistent message throughout all channels to maintain a better customer brand perception.

Customisation occurs more frequently online than in-store, as retailers can easily track, store and customise information about their customers, e.g. customers can open an account, store their data, etc. (Liang et al. 2011; Avery et al. 2012). Therefore, the design of websites needs to engage customers to increase arousal and action (Novak, Hoffman, and Yung 2000). The in-store experience also needs to be consistent with the online presence of the retailer. We have therefore posited that:

H<sub>2</sub>: Customisation has a positive effect on an omnichannel experience:

H<sub>2a</sub>: Customisation has a positive effect on online experience.

H<sub>2b</sub>: Customisation has a positive effect on mobile experience.

### ***Relationship between perceived value and an omnichannel experience***

Perceived value is often positioned at the heart of the customer experience (McDougall and Levesque 2000) with perceived value being the results or benefits customers receive in relation to total costs. The customer's perceived value is the difference between the benefits and costs offered by a retailer; however, this value is subjective and can differ from one to customer to another (McDougall and Levesque 2000). Sanchez et al. (2006) highlight the holistic nature of how a customer perceives value including both the cognitive and effective elements that affect the overall-perceived value of a purchase. A service's perceived value adds to a customer's overall satisfaction that is fundamental for a company as it plays a fundamental role in their success (Iglesias and Guillén 2004). Carlson, O'Casey, and Ahrholdt (2015) highlight the importance of service quality and argue this is the largest contribution to online perceived value.

McDougall and Levesque (2000) posit that perceived value is a key determinant of customer satisfaction and contend that perceived value should be included in customer satisfaction models. Taken in its entirety, as a key concept, perceived value may be a better predictor of repurchase intentions than either satisfaction or quality (Cronin, Brady, and Hult 2000). Value is not embedded in a product at the moment of exchange but, rather, is obtained through use processes (Tynan, McKechnie, and Chhuon 2010). Therefore, we argue if customers perceive channel importance, they are more likely to perceive the importance of the seamless approach to the omnichannel. We, thus, propose:

H<sub>3</sub>: Perceived value has a positive effect on an omnichannel experience:

H<sub>3a</sub>: Perceived value has a positive effect on online experience

H<sub>3b</sub>: Perceived value has a positive effect on in-store experience.

H<sub>3c</sub>: Perceived value has a positive effect on mobile experience.

### ***Relationship between technology readiness and omnichannel experience***

Technology readiness is the 'people's propensity to embrace and use new technologies for accomplishing goals in home life and at work' (Parasuraman 2000, 308). With new and improved technologies penetrating the market, increases in the need to understand customers' perception and acknowledgement towards it is vital (Parasuraman 2000). Retailers are embracing technologies in-store, e.g. customer service staffs are utilising tablets to enhance service delivery (Chandrawati and Lau 2016). Adding to prior work on technology acceptance, Parasuraman (2000) postulates that the likelihood of customers

engaging with new technology is dependent on the customer's willingness to explore new capabilities of technology, but also their potential inhibitions surrounding the lack of perceived control and/or trust with new technology (Rose et al. 2012). Notwithstanding the earlier viewpoint, Pantano's (2013) research found that there is a natural expectation on the part of customer that businesses have to adopt newer forms of technology to improve a customer's overall shopping experience because their expectations are elevated (Blazquez 2014).

Parasuraman and Colby (2015) constructed a 16-item scale identifying a customer spectrum of technology readiness. Their research highlights that different technological capabilities appeal to different customers and the customer's experience that be significantly affected by a company's advancements in technology use in-store. Juaneda-Ayensa, Mosquera, and Sierra Murillo (2016) identified the key drivers of technology readiness to be personal innovativeness, effort expectancy and performance expectancy and support that acceptance and intention to use new technologies influences an omnichannel customer's behaviour. We maintain the viewpoint that the less technology ready customers are, the less likely they will perceive a seamless approach to omnichannel. Therefore, we propose that:

H<sub>4</sub>: Technology readiness has a positive effect on online experience:

H<sub>4a</sub>: Technology readiness has a positive effect on online experience.

H<sub>4b</sub>: Technology readiness has a positive effect on in-store experience.

H<sub>4c</sub>: Technology readiness has a positive effect on mobile experience.

## Research design

This study used a two-part approach – firstly, interviewing 11 marketing professionals and secondly, using an online survey which was emailed to participants via social media and professional networks in the UK. Participants were screened on the basis that they shopped in a high-street shop, have a smartphone and have shopped online previously. This was essential to determine the effect of each omnichannel approach on the participants.

## Interview selection and results

This study was conducted between 2016 and 2017 using a two-part approach that began with interviewing 11 omnichannel marketing professionals who are responsible for either managing a multichannel or omnichannel strategy. Interviews were held in the UK and all professionals worked in organisations that had either implemented or were in the process of adopting an omnichannel approach. The interviews lasted on average between 30 and 60 minutes, the aim was to establish the industry perceptions of key challenges facing the implementation of omnichannel. The results of the interviews aided the construction of the conceptual model.

Results from the interviews highlighted that omnichannel was not being managed effectively by retailers. An omnichannel expert interviewed mentioned that 'customers

don't see on/off line as separate. The ideal customer journey allows them to select a product on line, go to a store to try it on or order online. It's seamless and integrated'. Channels were being managed separately and retailers needed to have a consistent approach across all channels, one marketing manager stated that 'many retailers manage their channels separately, having Directors of online, mobile and in-store competing and cannibalising profitability'. Marketing professionals also highlighted that the customer needed to be the central pivot of an omnichannel experience not the specific channel 'customers are less brand loyal than they used to be, an omnichannel approach amplifies our messages to our target audiences, which in turn helps us to deliver a more synergistic brand reputation – whether you're in-store, online or on a mobile device'. The predominant channels emerged as online, mobile and in-store, although other touchpoints were identified as important and worthy of investigation.

The findings from the interviews with the marketing professionals underpinned the quantitative study. Using a snowball approach, we used an online survey to recruit participants via social media and professional networks in the UK. Participants were screened on the basis that they shopped in a high-street shop, have a smartphone and have shopped online previously. This was essential to determine the effect of each omnichannel approach on the participants. While snowballing sampling, like most sampling techniques, is not without its flaws, Faugier and Sargeant (1997) note that snowball it is an acceptable methodology for drawing conclusions. The survey instrument was administered through a web-based survey, using Qualtrics. We utilised a web-based survey over a more traditional paper-based approach because of the advantages that it presents.

Despite some of the disadvantages of using online surveys such as low response rate, lack of personalisation and privacy issues, Evans and Mathur (2005) and Göritz (2004) found that a well-conducted online survey has far more advantages over other methods of survey data collection. This is mainly due to online survey global reach, flexibility and speed (see Evans and Mathur 2005 for more comprehensive analysis of the pros and cons of online surveys).

## Questionnaire measures

Measures from well-established scales were adopted when applicable, which Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma (2003) argue is an acceptable approach. Technology readiness was measured using six items adapted from Parasuraman and Colby (2015). Brand familiarity was measured using four items adapted from Park and Stoel (2005) and Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009). Five items used to measure perceived value were based on the work of Tynan, McKechnie, and Chhuon (2010). Customisation was captured using four items from Kumar, Petersen, and Leone (2010) and Parise, Guinan, and Kafka (2016). All the items and their sources are in [Appendix 1](#).

The dependent constructs of the model were operationalised and measured based on participants' usage of these constructs. High street shopping typically involves a physical location, a building that shoppers can visit, often referred to as bricks and mortar shops. High street shopping is viewed as being more tangible than online shopping as a consequence of its physical location and attached sensory cues (Rajamma, Paswan, and Ganesh 2007). Mobile shopping refers to all 'the activities of consumers who use wireless Internet service when shopping and purchasing via a mobile phone' (Ko, Kim, and Lee

2009, 671). Online shopping activity is performed by a customer via a computer-based interface using a retailer's digital storefront (website) (Häubl and Trifts 2000). Therefore, we asked the survey participants specific questions for each of these approaches. The construct of the high street usage was measured with three items adapted from Babin, Darden, and Griffin (1994), mobile usage was measured with three items adapted from Sohn (2017) and online usage was measured with four adapted items from Rose et al. (2012).

## Findings

In total 246 responses were collected. The sample characteristic is 74% female and 26% male. The age distribution of the respondents is 18–24 (35.8%), 25–34 (9.8%), 35–44 (29.5%), 45–54 (10.4%), 55–64 (7.5%) and 65–74 (6.9%). There were no statistical differences between gender and between the different age groups.

## Measurement model

Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 3. We started assessing the measurement model by examining the internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the model. The results of the Composite Reliability (CR) of each of the seven constructs were above the recommended threshold of 0.6 (see Bagozzi and Youjae 1988). The CR ranged from .93 for customisation to .79 for brand familiarity (see Table 2). Furthermore, during this stage we evaluated the construct validity and all our proposed constructs met the standard tests for convergent and discriminant validity. The average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct was above Bagozzi and Youjae's (1988) recommended 0.5 threshold. In addition, each of the measurement items were all above .5 (see Appendix 1 for the full report of item loadings). We further tested for discriminant validity using the corresponding 95% bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) confidence interval of the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations statistic (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2016), the results show that there are no constructs that are highly correlated, indicating that the discriminant validity has been achieved (see Table 2).

## Results of structural model

The assessment of the structural model was initiated by examining the VIF values, which indicate the multicollinearity between the constructs, if they are above the recommended

**Table 2.** HTMT test for discriminant validity, composite reliability, AVE.

	CR	AVE	Brand familiarity	High street	Mobile	Online	Perceived value	Customisation
Brand Familiarity	0.79	0.56	-					
High street	0.8	0.50	0.43	-				
Mobile	0.79	0.56	0.18	0.29	-			
Online	0.84	0.50	0.22	0.33	0.16	-		
Perceived value	0.87	0.64	0.30	0.27	0.46	0.36	-	
Customisation	0.83	0.54	0.42	0.21	0.2	0.42	0.35	-
Tech readiness	0.93	0.70	0.25	0.15	0.42	0.33	0.48	0.3

threshold of 5. In addition, we ran a blindfolding procedure to assess the predictive power of the model with an omission distance of eight, the results of the cross-validated redundancy values  $Q^2$  were all above the recommended threshold of zero, indicating the model's predictive accuracy. The  $F^2$  values showed good effect for the latent factors (high street .94, mobile 1.19 and online .33). The results were also supported by the  $Q^2$  values (high street .14, mobile .21 and online .21), why the  $R^2$  values (high street .49, mobile .52 and online .24) which according to Schlögel and Sarstedt (2016) allows to draw the conclusion that the model has a satisfactory in-sample predictive power.

The assessment of the path coefficient indicates that brand familiarity has a negative non-significant effect (.24) on online  $\beta = -0.3$  rejecting  $H_{1a}$ , whilst brand familiarity has the highest positive and significant (.05) impact on in-store touchpoint  $\beta = 0.3$  and positive significant (.05) impact on mobile  $\beta = .10$  enabling us to accept  $H_{1b}$  and  $H_{1c}$ . Customisation has a positive and significant (.05) impact on mobile  $\beta = 0.12$  and online  $\beta = 0.34$  supporting  $H_{2a}$  and  $H_{2b}$ . the path coefficients indicate that perceived value has a positive and significant (.01) effect on in-store touchpoint  $\beta = 0.2$ , and positive and significant (.05) effect on online  $\beta = 0.11$  supporting  $H_{3a}$  and  $H_{3b}$ . However, perceived value had a negative non-significant (.09) impact on mobile  $\beta = -0.31$  rejecting  $H_{3c}$ . Technology readiness has non-significant effect (.21) on the in-store  $\beta = -0.06$  rejecting  $H_{4b}$ , but a positive significant (.01) effect on online  $\beta = .15$  and mobile  $\beta = .26$  accepting  $H_{4a}$  and  $H_{4c}$ .

## Conclusions and managerial implications

A combination of economic turbulence (e.g. Berry et al. 2010) coupled with evolving customer needs has caused the operating models of retailers to adapt to reach new customers. Against the fluid backdrop, this study's overarching objective is to provide an improved understanding of omnichannel retailing and customer experience. This paper contributes to theory by presenting and empirically testing a conceptual framework identifying the factors that influence an omnichannel experience. Our proposed framework positions the factors that influence omnichannel experience to be: brand familiarity; customisation; perceived value and technology readiness. We position omnichannel retailing as a holistic experience across high street, mobile and online. Our results show that retailers need to consider multiple antecedents of omnichannel and plan the use of multiple touchpoints simultaneously to enhance their overall customer's experience.

Until recent times retailers often operated in silos (Gallino and Moreno 2014) and as omnichannel retailing is now taking over from multichannel there are compelling reasons why the customers should experience a consistent holistic experience with a retailer. Although there is a body of research evaluating a multichannel experience (e.g. Berman and Thelen 2004), these channels cannot work in a silo and need to be integrated to provide the customer with a consistent-unified experience. As highlighted in recent papers, see Ailawadi and Farris (2017); Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman (2015), there is limited research into omnichannel and how it effects the customer experience. The current empirical literature is focussed more on the supply chain and logistics of omnichannel rather than the factors that influence the experience. With the shortcoming of academic research regarding the factors of omnichannel retailing and customer experience we position this framework as a tool to stimulate further research and deepen our



understanding of omnichannel. The management on omnichannel is complicated and required to understand several factors for each touchpoint.

Our findings indicate that brand familiarity has a strong influence on the omnichannel (in-store and mobile), thus supporting Delgado-Ballester, Navarro and Sicilia's (2012) findings. Our research shows that retailers need to consider brand familiarity when managing Omnichannel, in-store and mobile perhaps by using prominent logos and distinct colours; this implies that marketing has a central role to play. Nevertheless, when it comes to online it is less likely to have an effect, as our results demonstrate. An explanation for this is that online shoppers' display greater price sensitivity (see Degeratu, Rangaswamy, and Wu 2000), when shopping online customers are price sensitive and they are exhibiting some habitual purchasing behaviour, e.g. buying from Amazon without making comparisons. In such a situation, they are less likely to respond to strong brand focus messages. Although this is the case, behaviourally online shopping does provide an easier environment within which to switch (Reibstein 2002).

Allowing customers to customise their apps or websites has a strong positive effect on omnichannel. Our results support Parise, Guinan, and Kafka (2016) by demonstrating that customisation enriches a customer's experience. Our results also allow us to maintain that customisation is more pertinent to online and mobile touchpoints (Liang et al. 2011). Retailers need to use the latest technology and customer data to understand their shopping behaviour and personalise their experience whilst maintaining a seamless experience.

Our results illuminate the position that when, as part of the overall customer experience, customers perceived a value in using the online touchpoint or the in-store touchpoint they are more likely to engage positively with omnichannel. Retailers should emphasise on building key messages when encouraging their customers to engage with different touchpoints. Where an omnichannel approach exists, the information provided is important to inform customers (Bell, Gallino, and Moreno 2014). For example, retailers should provide an incentive for customers to use in-store touchpoints such as a percentage discount on purchases.

The use of technology has transformed many business areas (Roy et al. 2016) but in the case of our study technology readiness does not have a significant effect on the in-store touchpoint. We argue that this is mainly due to customers relying on staff to assist them. However, congruent with Parasuraman and Colby's (2015) assertion, technology readiness has a positive impact on mobile and online. This requires retailers to assess the extent their customers are ready to use technologies and provide help and technical support. The use of online chatbots or live chat can facilitate this.

## **Limitations and future research opportunities**

Caution should be used in interpreting and generalising the results of this study. Although this study is valuable in demonstrating the causal factors of omnichannel customer experience, questions remain regarding the exact use of each touchpoint and the extent of their overlap. Such concern calls for further investigation into the relative importance of omnichannel drivers. We would encourage future research to examine the effect of different constructs to this study on omnichannel, e.g. Type of retailer or previous satisfaction experiences. Future researchers are also encouraged to explore moderating

factors on a omnichannel experience, such as in-store incentives or social influences. This study only focused on retail and was conducted in the UK, future researchers could apply and test the model in other cultures and on different industries.

The study's methodology has its limitations. For example, we use cross-sectional survey data which does not provide a long-term view of customer attitudes and behaviours towards omnichannel. The use of a longitudinal panel will enable evolving behaviour to be monitored. We recognise that despite our attempt to collect an even distribution data, our sample does not have a perfect gender breakdown. Our research also did not consider the effect of different types of retailers on omnichannel, as some customers are more likely to engage with different touchpoints depending on the type of retailer. We asked customers to reflect on a previous shopping experience from a supermarket or clothing multichannel retailer; this experience could be different by retailer type. Further research could investigate the omnichannel objectives of a retailer and compare them to the perception of customers. This will allow retailers to understand how their customer perceives and gets value from omnichannel. We encourage further research into the link between customer journey and omnichannel, in particular how customers' behaviour and perceptions change throughout their journey with a retailer.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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**Appendix 1.**

Constructs/Measures	Item Loadings
<b>Brand familiarity</b>	
I prefer to shop in shops I am familiar with	0.64
I like to shop in new shops that are unknown to me	0.81
I like to shop in shops that my friends or family have recommended to me	0.7
I know that I will have a good experience when shopping in my favourite shop	0.82
<b>Perceived value</b>	
If using a mobile phone/tablet/computer in store:	0.86
Having free Wi-Fi is important to me	0.87
Having a fast Wi-Fi is important to me	0.60
I usually look online to compare prices before I purchase in store	0.82
It is important that the website is mobile compatible	0.8
<b>Customisation</b>	
I prefer to shop with websites that remembers my details	0.70
I can shop more easily when I am able to customise web pages to my own liking	0.67
I like websites that are simple to use	0.80
I am more likely to engage with a website that: Remembers all my details	0.75
<b>Technology readiness</b>	
I like to use new technologies	0.85
Technology makes me more productive	0.8
Products and services that use the newest technologies are much more convenient to use	0.80
I like to keep up-to-date with the latest technologies	0.90
Other people come to me for advice on new technologies	0.80
I can usually figure out new high-tech products without help from others	0.79
Online	
<b>High street</b>	
Shopping on the high street is convenient	0.69
I only purchase from shops on the high street I am familiar with	0.76
Overall, I'm happy with my experience of shopping on the high street	0.88
<b>Mobile</b>	
How often do you use your own mobile phone or tablet in a shop? 1 = 'not very often' and 5 = 'very often'	0.87
How often have you used an information point/computer in a shop? 1 = 'not very often' and 5 = 'very often'	0.7
How often do you seek help and advice from a member of staff in a shop (subsequently using a PC/ laptop etc.)? 1 = 'not very often' and 5 = 'very often'	0.68
<b>Online</b>	
I like to compare prices with other shops online	0.8
I like to look at online reviews of products before I purchase	0.71
I like to compare features of products online	0.63
Shopping online convenient	0.78

All items are measured using a five-point scale anchored by 1 = 'strongly disagree' and 5 = 'strongly agree'.