

Chapter 1: Customer experience evolution in a fashion retail context: from mono- to omnichannel

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“What people really desire are not products but satisfying experiences”
(Abbott, 1955:40).

Customer experience management has received extensive scholarly and practitioner attention over the past four decades and is increasingly seen as a strategic imperative for retailers (Verhoef et al., 2009; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Khan et al., 2020). Given the rapidly changing retail landscape, the need to understand, manage and offer better customer experiences is a priority for retailers and academics alike (Bustamante and Rubio, 2017; Mahr et al., 2019; Gartner, 2021). Yet, despite rapid advances in experiential research, in terms of construct and methods, further exploration is called for (Bagdare, 2013; Petermans et al., 2013; Sachdeva and Goel, 2015; Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Becker, 2018). This chapter discusses the scholarly evolution of retail customer experience, from mono-channel (physical store) to omnichannel (seamless integration across channels and touchpoints) contexts. In doing so, it highlights emerging trends in the literature, to incorporate a more holistic approach towards customer experience(s) (Verhoef et al., 2009; Ballantine et al., 2015; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Becker, 2018), moving from a provider- to consumer-centric perspective that focuses on the customer journey (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Becker and Jaakkola, 2020; Poorrezaei et al., 2023), from simple retailer-customer dyads to ecosystems (including other actors e.g. family, friends, influencers) involving multiple channels and touchpoints, with implications for the physical store (Addis and Holbrook, 2001; Heinonen et al., 2010; Akaka et al., 2015; Becker, 2018), and the increasing integration and use of technology in amplifying retail customer experience (Blázquez, 2014; Poncin and Mimoun, 2014; Alexander and Kent, 2022). Consequently, this chapter takes an evolutionary rather than static perspective on experience. First, customer experience is defined and its theoretical developments are expounded. Next, the evolutionary developments of customer experience within retail settings is explored and examined, from a focus on physical stores to their

digital transformation from mono- to multi- then omnichannel retailing, with phygital retailing enabled through emergent retail technologies.

Definitions and conceptualisations of customer experience

Significant efforts have been made to define and conceptualise customer experience, yet the literature remains fragmented with a lack of consensus, both within academic silos as well as across multiple disciplines (Jain et al., 2017; Chevtchouk et al., 2021; Poorrezaei et al., 2023). Experience literature can be found in the fields of philosophy (e.g. Dewey, 1938), marketing and consumer research (e.g. Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Schmitt, 1999), cognitive science (e.g. Pinker, 1997), design science (e.g. Wright et al., 2003; Norman, 2004) and management practice (e.g. Pine and Gilmore, 1999), each assigning different meanings to the construct, with different conceptions and little integration (Petermans et al. 2013; Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2013). Most scholars agree that Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) were influential in viewing consumption from an experiential perspective, arguably instigating the scholarly stream of research on experience, but this research, it has been suggested, has lacked definitional consensus (Carú and Cova, 2003; Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2013; Poorrezaei et al., 2023).

Since then, scholars and practitioners have described the experience construct using a variety of terms and dimensions, relating to different contexts, including service, product, consumption, customer, brand and retail experience, as indicated in Table 1.1. These descriptions tend to overlap or be subsumed within each other, making delineation between terms ambiguous (Jain et al, 2017; Chevtchouk et al., 2021). Whilst all terms outlined in Table 1.1 share experience dimensions of cognition, behaviour and affect, few share sensorial dimensions and only 'customer experience' includes the social dimension. As the retail environment is seen as a setting where social interactions take place, the social context and thus the social dimension of customer experience is deemed important (Gentile et al, 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2008; Johnstone, 2012; De Kesyer et al., 2015).

Table 1.1: Key terms, definitions, dimensions and authors in experience-based research

Term	Indicative definition	Dimensions	Other authors
Consumption experience	'Consumption experience is seen as involving a steady flow of fantasies, feelings and fun. A subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses and esthetic criteria' (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982:132)	Cognitive Affective Behavioural	Mehrabian and Russell (1974); Donovan and Rossiter (1982); Hirschman and Holbrook (1982); Arnold and Price (1993); Holt (1995); Richins (1997); Turley and Milliman (2000); Addis and Holbrook (2001); Carú and Cova (2003); Joy and Sherry (2003); Alba and Williams (2012); Jantzen et al. (2012); Antéblan et al. (2013); Woodward and Holbrook (2013); Chaney et al. (2018)
Service experience	'The cognitive, affective and behavioural reactions associated with a specific service event' (Padgett and Allen, 1997:52)	Cognitive Affective Behavioural	Bifner et al. (1997); Jones (1999); Froehle and Roth (2004); Grace and O'Cass (2004); Pullman and Gross (2004); Arnold et al. (2005); Patricio et al. (2008); Heinonen et al. (2010); Zomerdijsk and Voss (2010); Brocato et al. (2012); Klaus and Maklan (2012); Juttner et al. (2013); Chandler and Lusch (2015); Jaakkola et al. (2015); Vargo and Lusch (2016); Voorhees et al. (2017); Bueno et al. (2019); Mahr et al. (2019); Roozen and Katidis (2019)
Product experience	'Experience can be characterised as all the thoughts, emotions, activities, and appraisals that occur during or as a result of an event' (Goode et al. 2010:276)	Cognitive Affective Behavioural	Hoch and Ha (1986); Hoch (2002); Aurier and Guintcheva (2014); Berger et al. (2018)
Brand experience	'Subjective, internal consumer responses that are evoked by brand-related experiential attributes when consumers search for, shop for, and consume brands' (Brakus et al. 2009:53)	Sensory Affective Intellectual Behavioural	Iglesias et al. (2011); Khan and Rahman (2015a, 2015b, 2016); Schmitt et al. (2015); Atwal and Williams (2017); Khan and Fatma (2017); Hepola et al. (2017); Saari and Mäkinen (2017); Andreini et al. (2018); Chevtchouk et al. (2021); Mondal and Chakrabarti (2021)

	‘Experiences are distinct economic offerings... an experience occurs where a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event’ (Pine and Gilmore, 1998:97-98)	Memorable Personal Entertainment Educational Escapist Aesthetic	
Retail experience	‘Retail customer experience is the sum total of cognitive, emotional, sensorial and behavioural responses produced during the entire process, involving an integrated series of interactions with people, objects, processes and environment in retailing’ (Bagdare and Jain, 2013:792)	Cognitive Emotional Sensorial Behavioural Joy Mood Leisure Distinctive	Baker et al. (1992); Jones (1999); Babin and Attaway (2000); Andreu et al. (2006); Bäckström and Johansson (2006); Healy et al. (2007); Naylor et al. (2008); Jones et al. (2010); Bäckström (2011); Bagdare (2013); Bagdare and Jain (2013); Bagdare (2016); Bäckström and Johansson (2017); Triantafillidou et al. (2017); Grewal and Roggeveen (2020)
Customer/ consumer experience	‘Experiences provide sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational values that replace functional values’ (Schmitt, 1999:57) ‘A multidimensional construct, which is holistic in nature and involves the customer’s cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer’ (Verhoef et al. 2009:32) ‘A multidimensional construct focusing on a customer’s cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial and social responses to a firm’s offering	Sensory (sense), Affective (feel), Cognitive (think) Physical (act) Social (relate) Cognitive Affective Emotional Physical Social Cognitive Emotional Sensorial Behavioural Social	Carbone and Haeckel (1994); Novac et al. (2000); Berry et al. (2002); Gilmore and Pine (2002); Shaw and Ivens (2002); Schmitt (2003); Frow and Payne (2007); Gentile et al. (2007); Meyer and Schwager (2007); Grewal et al. (2009); Puccinelli et al. (2009); Palmer (2010); Rose et al. (2012); Maklan and Klaus (2011); Klaus and Maklan (2013); Petermans et al. (2013); Schmitt and Zarantonello (2013); Andajani (2015); Sachdeva and Goel (2015); Bilgihan et al. (2016); Stein and Ramaseshan (2016); Schmitt et al. (2015); Yakhlef (2015); Hwang and Seo (2016); Lemon (2016); Parise et al. (2016); Bustamante and Rubio (2017); Jain et al. (2017); Varshneya et al. (2017); Becker and Jaakkola (2020); Khan et al. (2020); Roggeveen et al. (2020)

	during the customer's entire purchase journey' (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016:71)		
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(author's own)

Thus, for sake of clarity, this chapter draws on the broadest definition and dimensions by using the term customer experience. Defined as the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer (Verhoef et al., 2009:32). It is holistic, interactional and multidimensional in nature and marked by level of uniqueness, from the ordinary to extraordinary (Carú and Cova, 2003; Verhoef et al., 2009; De Keyser et al., 2015; Poorrezaei et al., 2023; Pusceddu et al., 2023).

Customer experience and its management have gained prominence as a subject for research inquiry. Many scholars have emphasised the importance of managing the total customer experience across the purchase journey to create value, competitive advantage, improve customer satisfaction and loyalty (e.g. Schmitt, 2003; Gentile et al., 2007; Grewal et al., 2009). Customer experience management (CEM) involves systematically designing, orchestrating and measuring the customer's entire experience (Carbone and Haeckel, 1994; Berry et al., 2002; Hwang and Seo, 2016; Poorrezaei et al., 2023), and has become a strategic priority for retailers as a key determinant of success (Frow and Payne, 2007; Verhoef et al., 2009; De Kesyer et al., 2015; Marketing Science Institute, 2022).

Physical retail: in-store customer experience

Many conceptions and discussions of customer experience until the 1990s were primarily focused on the physical retail store, specifically store design, in effecting purchasing behaviours (Hänninen et al., 2021). Hirschman and Holbrook's (1982) seminal study defined hedonic consumption as those facets of consumer behaviour that relate to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of consumption in-store (Bäckström and Johansson, 2006). In contrast with the long-focused view on utilitarian aspects of the shopping experience, based on task-related, rational

product purchases (Babin et al., 1994), hedonic consumption is driven by fun, entertainment and enjoyment (Jones, 1999; Alba and Williams, 2012).

Customer experience dimensions

Marking a shift from generic experience construct development to the retailing context more specifically, a myriad of retail customer experience theorisations have followed, focusing on the dimensions that influence customer experience and behaviours in-store (e.g. Baker et al., 2002; Bäckström and Johansson, 2006; Grewal et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2009). According to Bäckström and Johansson, (2017), these comprise:

- *Personal dimensions*, including consumer shopping motivation, attitude, mood and involvement (e.g. Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Babin and Darden 1995; Tauber, 1995; Spies et al., 1997; Mathwick et al., 2001; Soars, 2003) as well as gender and financial means (Jones, 1999);
- *Retail dimensions*, including store design, atmospherics, social aspects, service and price (e.g. Turley and Milliman, 2000; Baker et. al., 2002; Grewal et al., 2009; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2009);
- *Situational dimensions*, including the type of store, season and culture (Verhoef et al., 2009; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017);
- *Macro-level dimensions*, including economic and political (Grewal et al., 2009).

Over the years extensive scholarly attention has been given to personal and retail-related dimensions in-store, especially in relation to hedonic and utilitarian consumption value, with particular emphasis given to the former (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Babin et al., 1994; Jones, 1999), and to *atmospherics*, referring to tangible and intangible in-store cues that can be designed or altered in order to create emotional and behavioural consumer responses (Kotler, 1973; Puccinelli et al., 2009).

Kotler (1973) advanced the notion that the place where the product is purchased was a significant feature in consumption experience, arguably more important than

the product itself on influencing how people react and act (Bitner, 1992). This paved the way for numerous studies on overall store atmospheric elements and their role (e.g. Baker, 1987; Bitner, 1992; Babin and Attaway, 2000; Turley and Milliman, 2000; Ballantine et al., 2010; Krishna, 2012; Bagdare, 2013; Spence et al., 2014; Sachdeva and Goel, 2015), as well as the effects of specific atmospheric (sensory) elements (Alexander and Nobbs, 2016; Biswas, 2019), such as *sight cues* (e.g. Bellizzi and Hite, 1992; Halsted, 1993; Babin et al., 2003; Van Rompay et al. 2012; Reynolds-McIlroy et al., 2017), *sound cues* (e.g. Milliman, 1982; Garlin and Owen, 2006; Morin et al., 2007; Jain and Bagdare, 2011; Knoferle et al., 2012, 2017; Biswas et al., 2014), *touch cues* (Krishna et al., 2010; Martin, 2011; Hultén, 2012), *smell cues* (e.g. Spangenberg et al., 1996; Madzharov et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2018; Roy and Singh, 2022) and *taste cues* (e.g. Lindstrom, 2005; Hultén, 2009; Rodrigues et al., 2011; Wiedmann et al., 2013).

Here, the retailers' service experience was recognised as being crucial in seeking to control and add materiality to the abstract nature of in-store atmosphere, thereby positively influencing consumers' product and service evaluation (Hoffman and Turley, 2002; Bäckström and Johansson, 2006). This approach to the physical environment was coined as the '*servicescape*' (Bitner, 1992), with more recent expanded conceptions as the '*experiencescape*' (O'Dell, 2005), describing places where human interactions, pleasure, entertainment and enjoyment occur (Tresidder and Deakin, 2019; Tasci and Pizam, 2020). Research into store atmosphere concludes that positive retail environmental features influence consumers' subjective experience, especially pleasure and arousal and leads to approach behaviours, for example, increasing dwell time, money spent, impulse purchasing, merchandise value and patronage intention while improving consumer relationships and customer experience (e.g. Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Babin and Attaway, 2000; Baker et al., 2002; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2009).

However, whilst contributing to our initial understanding of customer experience in retail, these early studies arguably fail to fully acknowledge the more holistic aspects of customer experience and how consumers experience and interact with retail environments (Bäckström and Johansson, 2017) in five key ways, discussed next.

Limitations of traditional customer experience conceptions

Traditional conceptions of CX first fail to fully consider the *social dimension* of the servicescape or more holistic approaches to in-store experience (Verhoef et al., 2009; Spence et al., 2014; Ballantine et al., 2015). Interactionally, customer experience derives from human (e.g. employees, other consumers) and non-human (e.g. self-service technologies) interfaces. However, without an interaction, there is nothing to experience (De Keyser et al., 2015; Biswas, 2019), yet the retail environment's social nature has received less attention (Rosenbaum, 2006; Johnstone and Conroy, 2006; Johnstone, 2012; Alexander, 2019). Indeed, many recent scholars support Verhoef et al.'s (2009) contention that customer experience is holistic in nature, involving multiple dimensions, whilst acknowledging its subjective nature, and call for further empirical studies that take an interconnected approach (e.g. Petermans et al., 2013; Sachdeva and Goel, 2015; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017). This sentiment relates to Part 2, with practitioner's (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) emphasising the importance of an audience centric-approach and social involvement in customer experience optimisation.

Second, customer experience is now no longer limited to the customer's interaction in-store but is impacted by a combination of experiences that evolves over time, across channels during the *purchase journey* (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017). With growth in digital channels, novel ways of organising the physical store are necessary and require investigation (Bell et al., 2014; Grewal et al., 2017; Gauri et al., 2021); however, empirical consumer and retailer perspectives on this remain scarce (Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Bruce et al., 2023; Poorrezaei et al., 2023).

Third, *customer experience is dynamic*, with past and current experience, impacting future experience, yet the dynamics of customer experiences over time has also received little attention in retailing research (Verhoef et al., 2009; De Keyser et al., 2015).

Fourth, the use of *technology in-store* has been accepted as influencing customer experiences, with scholars referring to it as an important atmospheric tool (Blázquez,

2014; Poncin and Mimoun, 2014) and responsible for propelling omnichannel capabilities (Herhausen et al., 2015; Cai and Lo, 2020) in the past 10 years or so, which is absent from early theorisations. The way people experience retail is being transformed through technologies and the lines between human and machine becoming increasingly blurred (Lemon, 2016; Jocevski, 2020; Bonfanti et al., 2023; Chang et al., 2023).

Fifth, prior studies focus on retailer-customer dyads, thereby arguably failing to reflect the complex, multidimensional, multi-channel and touchpoint nature of today's *customer experience retail ecosystem*. This is where traditional views on customer experience in retail environments that focus on atmospherics, and more recent conceptions diverge (De Keyser et al., 2015; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Roggeveen et al., 2020). Current scholars recognise the shift from provider- (i.e. retailer control) to consumer-centric conceptions of customer experience, that takes place as part of a longer journey, across different channels, arguably, impacting on the relevance of earlier studies in the context of today's omnichannel retail environment (Becker, 2018; Becker and Jaakkola, 2020; Roggeveen et al., 2020). This paradigm shift reflects Vargo and Lusch's (2004) notion of co-creating value collaboratively with customers over an extended time frame. This embodies an evolution of retailing beyond products, services, and post services to the most important expression of the retailscape - customer experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Maklan and Klaus, 2011). The move from mono-physical store to omnichannel convergence and customer experience is discussed next.

The digitalisation of retail customer experience: convergence online and offline

Over the past three decades, retailing has radically transformed due to digitalisation. The role of the physical store has changed from a place of transaction to a showroom and a place to interact, as the emergence and development of online retailing has enabled different and more meaningful customer experiences (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013; Hänninen et al., 2021). Consequently, conceptual and empirical retail research on customer experience has grown (e.g. Bolton et al., 2018;

Paul and Rosenbaum, 2020; Chevtchchouk et al., 2021). Huuhka et al. (2014) and Hänninen et al (2021) offer a cogent synthesis of the evolution of retailing over the past three decades (see Figure 1.1), from mono physical channel to multi- then omnichannel retailing precipitated by advances in information and communication technology, broadly falling into three phases.

Figure 1.1: Chronology of retail evolution from physical to omnichannel: 1970-present (authors own, based on Huuhka et al. 2014 and Hänninen et al. 2021)

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Phase 1: 1990s - siloed channel proliferation

E-commerce burgeoned in the mid-1990s as retailers used information and communication technology and the internet, transforming buying behaviours and business processes (e.g. Reynolds, 2000; Grewal et al., 2009; Gereaa et al., 2021; Hänninen et al., 2021). This channel shift destabilised traditional retailing, with the acceleration of e-commerce reducing the customer's need to visit a physical store. The term "marketplace" was coined to depict the real-time interactivity and global connectivity realised by the internet (Dutta et al., 1998).

Phase 2: 2000-2010 - rise of multichannel - retailer centric

Multichannel retailing dominated practitioner and academic attention during this period, yet inconsistencies in both definitions and characteristics led to confusion in its progressive conceptualisation - with emerging terms like multi-, cross-, and omnichannel retailing (Picot-Coupey et al., 2016). It is generally accepted that multichannel retailing refers to the design, deployment, coordination, and evaluation of different channels (i.e. online, offline etc.), yet with siloed structures and no integration or synergistic management of them (Neslin et al., 2006; Rigby, 2011; Gallino and Moreno 2014). Multichannel became superfluous when the same customers were using more than one channel. Moreover, with the proliferation of channels, issues of definitional delineation, integration, coordination and synergies became paramount (Herhausen et al., 2015; Picot-Coupey et al., 2016; Cai and Lo, 2020). Channel integration is defined as the degree to which different channels

interact with each other (Bendoly et al., 2005), which is conceived as a continuum, based on level of integration intensity - from none (multichannel) to partial (cross-channel) to full (omnichannel) (Lewis et al., 2014; Picot-Coupey et al., 2016). Given the often overlapping channel conceptions and meanings, which has caused confusion (Picot-Coupey et al., 2016; Yrjölä et al., 2018a; Hu and Tracogna, 2020), Table 1.2. presents a synthesis of the main theoretical contributions in the field of retailing, arranged by thematic classification and temporal channel evolution from multi- cross- to omnichannel. Whilst it can occur from offline to online or from online to store, the focus of this chapter is the offline; that is, the physical store providing access to, knowledge and experience of the online store and digital touchpoints (Herhausen et al., 2015).

Table 1.2: Theoretical evolution: from multi- to omnichannel retailing

Theme	Multi- channel 2000+	Cross- channel 2005+	Omni- channel 2011-present
Concept development	Berman and Thelen (2004); Neslin et al. (2006); Sousa and Voss (2006)	Chatterjee (2010)	Rigby (2011); Levy et al. (2013); Bell et al. (2014); Beck and Rygl (2015); Hansen and Sia (2015); Chopra (2016); Rey-Moreno and Medina-Molina (2016); Ailawadi and Farris (2017); Chen et al. (2018); Galipoglu et al. (2018); von Briel (2018); Ye et al. (2018); Cai and Lo (2020); Mahadevan and Joshi (2021); Mishra et al. (2021); Sharma and Dutta (2023)
Channel management / integration	Otto and Chung (2000); Schoenbachler and Gordon (2002); Payne and Frow (2004); Balasubramanian et al. (2005); Bendoly et al. (2005); Tate et al. (2005); Verhoef et al. (2007); Kwon and Lennon (2009); Yan et al. (2010); Chiu et al. (2011); Herhausen et al. (2015); Pauwels	Chatterjee (2006); Falk et al. (2007); Brynjolfsson et al. (2009); Lee and Kim (2010); Schramm-Klein et al. (2011); Avery et al. (2012); Lewis et al. (2014); Cao and Li (2015); Huang et al. (2016)	Pawar and Sarmah (2015); Cummins et al. (2016); Picot-Coupey et al. (2016); Huré et al. (2017); Park and Lee (2017); Rodriguez-Torrico et al. (2017); Saghir et al. (2017); Sopadjieva et al. (2017); Bell et al. (2018); Cao and Li (2018); Hosseini et al. (2018); Shen et al. (2018); Wiener et al. (2018); Yrjölä et al. (2018a/b); Zhang et al. (2018);

	and Neslin (2015); Hossain et al. (2019)		Jocevski et al. (2019); Alexander and Blázquez Cano (2019); Tyrväinen and Karjaluo, (2019); Xu and Jackson (2019); Quach et al. (2020); Gao et al. (2021); Gasparin et al. (2022); Hübner et al. (2022); Neslin (2022); Nguyen et al. (2022)
Consumer behaviour / customer journey	McGoldrick and Collins (2007); Schröder and Zaharia (2008); Kwon and Jain (2009); Gensler et al. (2012); Wolny and Charoensuksai (2014); Melis et al (2015); Pantano and Viassone (2015); Rapp et al. (2015); Bèzes (2016); Hu and Tracogna (2020); Jo et al. (2020)	Piercy (2012); Heitz-Spahn (2013); Cao (2014)	Juaneda-Ayensa et al. (2016); Gao and Su (2017); Barwitz and Maas (2018); Kazancoglu and Aydin (2018); Larke et al. (2018); Mosquera et al. (2018); Kang (2019); De Borba et al. (2020); Lee (2020); Lynch and Barnes (2020); Mishra et al. (2021); Sahu et al. (2021); Tueanrat et al. (2021); ben Mimoun et al. (2022); Lazaris et al. (2022); Salvietti et al. (2022); Poorrezaei et al. (2023)
Retail strategy	Brnyjolfsson and Smith (2000); Rangaswamy and van Bruggen (2005); Neslin and Shankar (2009); Zhang et al. (2010); Hübner et al. (2016)		Brynjolfsson et al. (2013); Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson (2014); Lazaris and Vrechopoulos (2014); Verhoef et al. (2015); Hagberg et al. (2017); Huré et al. (2017); Berman and Thelen (2018); Shen et al. (2018); Yrjölä et al. (2018b); Savastano et al. (2019); Gauri et al. (2021); Asmare and Zewdie (2022); Barbosa and Casais (2022)
Customer experience	Burke (2002); Jones and Runyan (2013); Blázquez (2014); Alexander and Alvarado (2017)		Bhalla (2014); Cook (2014); Hoepner et al. (2015); Blakeney (2016); Melero et al. (2016); Mirsch et al. (2016); Ieva and Ziliani (2018); Tyrväinen and Karjaluo (2019); Hickman et al. (2020); Klaus (2020); Shi et al. (2020); Verhoef (2021); Chang and Li

		(2022); Rahman et al. (2022)
(author's own)		

Scholarly retail studies during this phase shifted to understanding online customer behaviour, the emergence of multichannel retailing conceptions (Mathwick et al., 2001; Arnold and Reynolds, 2003; Verhoef et al., 2009) as well as channel specific studies, offline (e.g. Sweeney and Soutar, 2001) or online (e.g. Childers et al., 2001; Ahn et al., 2007). Simultaneously, customer experience and customer experience management gained increasing interest from scholars and practitioners alike, with growing realisation of the importance of channel and touchpoint convergence across the customer journey, in enhancing customer experience (e.g. Verhoef et al., 2009; Grewal et al., 2009; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2015; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Becker, 2018; Hänninen et al., 2021); its significance giving rise to a special issue on retail customer experience in the *Journal of Retailing* in 2009.

The growing importance of the customer experience construct was indicated by the increasing number of scholarly publications between 2012-2014, as indicated in Table 1.2, yet most were limited to quantitative enquiry, covering aspects of antecedents, measurement and consequences of consumer experience (e.g. Bagdare, 2013; Bagdare and Jain, 2013; Khan and Rahman, 2015a, 2016; Bueno et al., 2019). Verhoef et al's (2009) earlier customer experience definition was extended to reflect the onus on the purchase journey, as a "multidimensional construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social response to a firm's offering during the customer's entire purchase journey" (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016:71).

Customer experience continued to be recognised as strategically important, with greater attention given to understanding how retailers could best harness and integrate their offline and online channels during this period (Cachon and Lariviere, 2005; Rigby, 2011; Brynjolfsson et al., 2013; Bustamante and Rubio, 2017; Huré et al., 2017). Retailers experienced the advantages of blending offline and online retailing in the pursuit of integrated retail - that is, the benefits of uniting services of accessibility and assortment with personal inspection and immediate gratification (Badrinarayanan et al., 2012; Herhausen et al., 2015).

Phase 3: 2011-today - rise of omnichannel - customer centric

By the mid-2010s, traditional physical stores started to see declining footfall as consumer purchase behaviours shifted and, conventional retailers were errant in not embracing newer digital ways of driving consumers to the store (e.g. via social media), whilst increased use of new interaction touchpoints, specifically social media and mobile technology, continued to challenge and change the retail customer experience (Ailawadi and Farris, 2017; Ieva and Zilani, 2018; Larke et al., 2018). By the late-2010s, the online channel was firmly entrenched in retailing, and academic and practitioner theorisations of multichannel had been widely displaced by omnichannel retailing, as retailers acknowledged the need to offer a seamless customer experience across the purchase journey, regardless of channel (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Sopadjeva et al., 2017; Tyrväinen and Karjaluo, 2019; Mahadevan and Joshi, 2021). Rigby's (2011:4) first practitioner-oriented definition of omnichannel retailing as, "an integrated sales experience that melds the advantages of physical stores with the information-rich experience of online shopping", was pioneered by scholars Brynjolfsson et al. (2013) and Bell et al. (2014) by taking retailer competitive advantage and customer-focused perspectives, paving the way for burgeoning areas of further research in the domain (Cai and Lo, 2020; Hickman et al., 2020; Mishra et al., 2021; Salvietti et al., 2022; Poorrezaei et al., 2023).

Growing capabilities and the significance of smartphones has accelerated the implementation of omnichannel strategies by retailers (Ailawadi and Farris, 2017). Consequently, as consumers have become accustomed to using different channels in their 'journey', so they are influenced by behavioural, cognitive and emotional factors and interactions (Verhoef et al., 2015; Grewal and Roggeveen, 2020; Mele et al., 2021). In this scenario, traditional retailers are shifting from a "bricks and mortar" to a "bricks and clicks" format by adopting multiple touchpoints to communicate and transact with customers (Hübner et al., 2016; Jucevski, 2020). Whilst advances have been made in our understanding of customer experience management, within the customer journey and decision stages (pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase), ongoing consideration is required, specifically on the nonlinearity of the purchase

journey, with consumers jumping between stages and channels, and each shaped by contextual, environmental, societal and individual factors (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Grewal and Roggeveen, 2020; Mele et al., 2021; Poorrezaei et al., 2023).

Conception and definition of omnichannel retailing

The concept of omnichannel therefore represents a shift in the retail paradigm (Verhoef et al., 2015; Jocevski et al., 2019), from a retailer- to a customer-centric approach, enabling consumers to access, compare, choose, purchase and return goods more readily and seamlessly (Hsieh et al., 2012; Wagner, 2013; Blázquez, 2014; Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson, 2014; Baxendale et al., 2015; Stein and Rameseshan, 2016; Ailawadi and Farris, 2017; Gauri, 2021; Klilehto et al., 2021). Verhoef et al. (2015:3) define omnichannel management 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 are optimized”. Yet, despite a surge of academic interest in the concept in the past five years, research remains fragmented (Mahadevan and Joshi, 2021), with a scarcity of studies examining how an omnichannel retailing approach affects the customer experience (Verhoef et al., 2015; Ye et al., 2018; Hickman et al., 2020; Poorrezaei et al., 2023) and few studies providing an understanding of the opportunities and challenges of omnichannel for the physical store (Picot-Coupey et al., 2016; Barann et al., 2020; Jocevski, 2020; Bruce et al., 2023).

Many studies at this time focused on the cause and effect of digitalisation, technology advances and omnichannel retailing (e.g. Beck and Rygl, 2015; Rapp et al., 2015; Verhoef et al., 2015; Hagberg et al., 2016), yet the physical store is conspicuous by its relative absence in this literature stream (Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Hänninen et al., 2021). The adoption of online, multi- and omnichannel naturally resulted in a shift in research focus, yet the physical store remains the main channel choice for many consumers (Hagberg et al., 2017; Avsar, 2021; Mahadevan and Joshi, 2021; Euromonitor, 2023). What was initially signalled as a physical retail apocalypse (Helm et al., 2020; Paul and Rosenbaum, 2020) has shifted to a recognition that the role of the physical store is being redefined, with the need for more research to understand the future of the physical store space, its

multidimensionality features, its further evolution and influence on customer experiences (Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Bustamante and Rubio, 2017; Reinartz et al., 2019), especially since the COVID-19 pandemic (Gerea et al., 2021; Hänninen et al., 2021; Bruce et al., 2023). This is crucial as retailers continue to invest in in-store technologies to enhance customer experience and engagement (Shankar et al., 2020; Ylilehto et al., 2021; Bonfanti et al., 2023; Pusceddu et al., 2023).

Towards omnichannel retailing through in-store technology

Technology is reshaping the retail landscape (Grewal et al., 2017; Helm et al., 2020; Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020; Shankar et al., 2020; Quinones et al., 2023). A significant enabler of retail change over the past two decades has been digital transformation, as such technologies have become more pervasive (Reinartz et al., 2019; Ylilehto et al., 2021). In recent years, the blurring of channel boundaries has accelerated, with traditional offline stores investing in their online service offer to drive convenience and assortment, whilst online retailers have been investing in physical stores to drive customer experience (Reinartz et al., 2019; Ratchford et al., 2022; Pusceddu et al., 2023). The modern retail landscape is defined by constantly changing consumer expectations and increasing customer touchpoints, which demands channel unification (Foroudi et al., 2018; Raconteur, 2021a/b). The physical store has become increasingly integrated with digital channels to offer a connected, personal experience in the consumer's 'phygital' shopping journey (Blázquez, 2014; Fernández et al., 2018; Mosquera et al., 2018). Technology-based service delivery systems in-store have become an integral part of shopping and are shown to impact on customer experience (Verhoef et al., 2009; Grewal et al., 2017; Larke et al., 2018; Hossain et al., 2019). Today, when customers can check their phones to see product assortments and prices from home, physical stores have to differentiate themselves (Gauri et al., 2021) if they are to retain a role.

The ascendance of phygitality

While the term phygital is not new to retail practitioners or researchers, its meaning remains contested and under-developed (Klaus, 2021; Batat, 2022; Bonfanti et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2023). It is widely assumed that its conception dates back to 2007 when Australian advertising agency, Momentum, first coined the term to describe the connection between physical and digital ecosystems (Ilius, 2023). Since then, the usage of the term has proliferated amongst practitioners with tardy scholarly attention culminating in 2021 (Mele et al., 2023). Many argue that its conceptual vagueness has perpetuated scholarly confusion and restricted its development (Klaus, 2021; Batat, 2022; Lee et al., 2023; Mele et al., 2023). A recent 'phygital' word search on Google and Google Scholar outputted 4.5 million and 4680 results respectively. Moving from the dominance of the word being used as an adjective to a noun, Klaus (2021:1) conceptualises "phygitality" as a new form of "hybrid consumption experience", which integrates customer interactions online and offline (i.e. syneresis of physical and digital) (Batat, 2022; Lee et al., 2023). Phygital experiences are perceived as a merging, multidimensional ecosystem that creates a continuum in consumer value (Batat, 2022). Therefore, phygital customer experience management involves continuously aligning a retailer's resources with those of its customers, with the experience being co-created by both (Jacob et al., 2023).

Phygital discourse can be broadly categorised into six areas: context (e.g. retail, tourism, luxury, fashion) (e.g., Jannilli and Spagnoli, 2021; Klaus, 2021; Kim et al., 2022; Hyun et al., 2022; Pangarkar et al., 2022; Lawry, 2023), channel, places and spaces (e.g., Duhan and Singh, 2019; Akter et al., 2021), objects and applications (e.g., Tom Dieck and Han, 2022; Mele et al., 2023), customer journey (e.g., Mele et al., 2021; Mele and Russo Spena, 2022; Jacob et al., 2023; Mele et al., 2023), shopping experience (e.g., Ballina et al., 2019; Batat, 2019, 2022; Samir and Soumia, 2020; Silva and Cachinho, 2021) and wider benefits afforded to customers – empowerment, satisfaction, patronage, happiness, marketplace immersion and increased accessibility (e.g., Banik, 2021; Mishra et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2023) and companies – enhanced brand image consistency, customer relationships, resource alignment and leveraged capabilities (e.g., Homburg et al., 2017; Siebert et al. 2020; Talukdar and Yu, 2021; Jacob et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2023). Much of the extant discourse has attracted recent criticism for limiting the phygital construct to channels, seen as 'a part' of CX, rather than taking a more holistic customer-centric approach

that extends beyond economic (purchase) and functional (channel) boundaries (associated with omnichannel retailing) (e.g. Klaus, 2021; Batat, 2022; Pangarkar et al., 2022; Bonfanti et al., 2023; Lawry, 2023; Lee et al., 2023), regardless what channel or technology contributes to the experience (Klaus, 2021). In expounding the concept, Batat (2022:10) defines phygital as “a holistic and integrative ecosystem that adopts a consumer standpoint as a starting point and then integrates a combination of physical, human, digital and media content elements, platforms, technologies and extended realities, among others; the goal of phygital is to offer unique and compelling customer experiences that should guarantee a coherent continuum in the delivery process of consumer value provided from digital to physical and vice versa”.

Two conceptual frameworks offer utility in the advancement of phygitality. The ‘Phygital CX framework’ (PH-CX) (Batat, 2022: 11-12) depicts that CX is created by shifting from physical to digital (i.e. digitalisation) and from digital to physical (i.e. physicalisation). Along this continuum, digital technologies provide customers an immersive experience with higher levels of emotional, symbolic and social value (Bonfanti et al., 2023). Second, the ‘ADO framework’ (based on antecedents, decisions and outcomes) (Mele et al., 2023) offers a holistic interpretation for phygital transformation, whereby antecedents (A) comprise phygital resources (objects and applications) and phygital context (place/space), which in turn, affect decisions (D) during the phygital customer journey, which then enable phygital experience outcomes (O). Both models envision phygital as extending beyond channel integration, as a nexus or hybrid that is still emerging and developing. These frameworks align with Alexander’s notion of Experiential Retail Territories (ERT), explained further in chapter 2. The shift towards hyper-phygital fashion experiences and practices are discussed further in Chapters 2, 4 and 6.

In-store technologies: definition, types, integration, impact

In-store technologies are defined as “different devices that facilitate the shopping process at various points in the store” (Mosquera et al., 2018:66) and “digitise and enhance the customer experience” (Lorente-Martinez et al., 2020:2) by enabling consumer interaction. Research on in-store technologies has gained increasing

attention over the past twenty years, yet remains an emerging field, with most papers published over the past five years and with few accepted theoretical frameworks, adoption models or technology taxonomies (Dekimpe et al., 2020; Wolpert and Roth, 2020; Grewal et al., 2021; Ylilehto et al., 2021). Existing studies primarily focus on consumer intention to adopt or use technologies (e.g. Venkatesh and Davis, 2000; Curran et al., 2003; Montoya-Weiss et al., 2003; Meuter et al., 2005; Weijters et al., 2007), ownership and control (e.g. Beck and Rygl, 2015; Inman and Nikolova, 2017; Bèzes, 2019), the consequences of usage on satisfaction, loyalty and engagement (e.g. Holloway and Beatty, 2008; Kim et al., 2013), cost and service measurement (e.g. Zeithaml et al., 2002; Parasuraman, 2000; Parasuraman et al., 2005; Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020), and to a lesser extent, retail management strategies towards integration (e.g. Hagberg et al., 2017; Pantano et al., 2018; Roy et al., 2018; Tom Dieck and Han, 2022) and their contribution towards store atmospherics (e.g. Poncin and Mimoun, 2014; Pantano, 2016; Roggeveen et al., 2020).

From a customer perspective, technologies are seen to positively influence the shopping experience, increase store attractiveness and buying behaviour (Lee and Leonas, 2018; Savastano et al., 2019; Ha, 2020; Ylilehto et al., 2021), whilst enabling retailers to improve the digital information on customer behaviours and thereby data-driven decision-making, optimise operations and facilitate channel integration (Inman and Nikolova, 2017; Grewal et al., 2020; Chang et al., 2023; Quinones et al., 2023). They are known to facilitate both utilitarian and hedonic consumption experience through self-checkout (Lee, 2015; Fernandes and Pedroso, 2017; Bonfanti et al., 2023) smartphones and retail apps (Shankar et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2013; Pantano and Priporas, 2016; Fuentes et al., 2017; Perry et al., 2019) and virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies (Rese et al., 2017; Watson et al., 2018; Jin et al., 2021). However, most existing studies focus on a single technology type, rather than several, and their interrelated influence on the total customer experience (Blázquez, 2014; Wolpert and Roth, 2020). In terms of technology types, Radio-frequency identification (RFID), digital signage and self-service technologies are considered the most prevalent and pervasive in service settings (e.g. Weijters et al., 2007; Dennis et al., 2010; Chen, 2012; Eastlick et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2013; Renko and Druzijanic, 2014; Bhattacharya, 2015;

Roggeveen et al., 2016; Venkatesh et al., 2017; Willems et al., 2017; Hauser et al., 2019; Lee and Lyu, 2019; Pantano and Vannucci, 2019; Alexander and Kent, 2021; Ha, 2020). The relatively few studies that take a general approach to in-store technologies serve to offer an index and classification of technologies and retailer prioritisation towards them (Willems et al., 2017; Inman and Nikolova, 2017; Hagberg et al., 2017; Pantano and Vannucci, 2019; Baier and Rese, 2020; Wolpert and Roth, 2020), with most acknowledging the role of technologies in the future of physical retailing, but there remains a dearth of research in this area (Hwangbo et al., 2017; Grewal et al., 2017; Dekimpe et al., 2020; Quinones et al., 2023).

Despite the accelerated pace at which technology is permeating retailing (Grewal et al., 2017; Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020; Shankar et al., 2020), and its progress being a strategic issue for many retailers (Pantano and Vannucci, 2019; Wolpert and Roth, 2020; Quinones et al., 2023), scholarly research on the impact of technology on the total customer experience remains nascent and could be considered work in progress due to the incongruence between different channels in the physical store that may generate negative experiences (Verhoef et al. 2009; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Alexander and Kent, 2021). Indeed, recent trade journals, market reports (BoF, 2020; Bridges, 2021; The Future Laboratory, 2023; Euromonitor, 2023) and interactions with fashion retailers support the view that omnichannel frictions remain, with limited 'buy online return to store' or 'buy from store return to any store' service capabilities, despite recognised rapid retailer advances and investment in digitalisation since the pandemic (Industry interviews with the author, 2021, see also Alexander and Kent (2022), for seven friction points of the shopping journey). Moreover, Bäckström and Johansson's (2017) study revealed that while many retailers emphasised innovation and advanced technologies in-store, in practice most prioritised traditional values such as personnel, layout and display over technological investment. These inconsistencies are particularly evident in the fashion sector, where scholars refer to fashion retailers' innovativeness towards in-store technologies (Colombi et al., 2018; Pantano and Vannucci, 2019), conflicting with some practitioner perspectives (Stephens, 2018; Thomson, 2019; Fish, 2020; McKinsey, 2020; Euromonitor, 2023; The Future Laboratory, 2023).

Research into in-store channel integration has demonstrated continuous evolution facilitated by technologies, yet prior studies have tended to take a cross-sectional approach thereby limiting their ability to assess changes in retailer technology adoption and customer experience (e.g. Iman and Nikolova, 2017; Willems et al., 2017; Pantano and Vannucci, 2019; Yadav and Pavlou, 2020), nor on the possible usage of new technologies (Pantano et al., 2018; Shankar et al., 2020), despite strong consumer appetite (Grewal et al., 2020). Further studies are required to engage with retailing dynamics (Dekimpe and Gyskens, 2019) in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the impact of technologies and their future evolution (Souiden and Ladhari, 2019; Paul and Rosenbaum, 2020). This is a necessity - especially for physical stores - in order to avoid becoming obsolescent (Mende and Noble, 2019), to meet the high service, personalisation and convenience expectations of consumers (Grewal et al., 2020; Grewal and Roggeveen, 2020; Euromonitor, 2023; The Future Laboratory, 2023) and anticipate future unified spatial experiences (Hoyer et al., 2020; Bruce et al., 2023). The leveraging of technologies in store to generate phygital experiences are exemplified in the case studies in chapter 6.

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Image caption:

Figure 0.1: Multidisciplinary literature informing part 1 (authors own)

Figure 1.1: Chronology of retail evolution from physical to omnichannel: 1970-present (authors own, based on Huuhka et al. 2014 and Hänninen et al. 2021)