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The Role of Technology in Omnichannel Strategy: The Case of Fashion Industry

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Abstract. Customers' shopping behaviors and attitudes in fashion have grown more multichannel. Merchants need a unified strategy across all channels to accommodate the many touchpoints buyers use in their product research and decision-making processes. There has been an uptick in retailers' excitement for integrating cutting-edge in-store and online technologies that make shopping more satisfying by providing customers with up-to-date information that helps them make better-informed decisions, saves them time, and gives them a sense of agency. This article applies the TAM framework to the question of how customers' perceptions and intentions toward ttechnology usagein retail settings affect the sale of fashion products. The information was gathered via a survey sent out to 424 clients. Results corroborated TAM's finding that in-store and out-of-store technology had a favorable effect on customers' impressions of the value and convenience of an omnichannel solution.

Keywords: in-store technology, out-store technology, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), omnichannel system, fashion industry.

1. Introduction

In the modern day, omnichannel commerce has become a crucial retail strategy (Furquim *et al.*, 2022). Omnichannel retailing requires synchronizing all customer interactions instead of multichannel retailing's concentration on maximizing separate channels (Rahman *et al.*, 2022). The goal of omnichannel management, as defined by Yin *et al.* (2022), is to "optimize the customer experience across channels and channel performance by using the synergy between numerous access channels and customer touchpoints." Significant interest in omnichannel retailing research has grown over the last decade, with studies looking at the conceptual and strategic elements of omnichannel retailing as well as customers' views and behaviors. Despite a recent uptick in study on omnichannel retailing, most studies concentrate on omnichannel management aspects such logistics and supply chain, rather than understanding the role of technology in enabling interactions between businesses and customers. New research is needed to determine how new technologies affect omnichannel commerce, as shown by a study like Cai and Lo (2020), which reveals a gap in the role of new technologies in omnichannel management..

The omnichannel supply chain unifies all disparate distribution channels into a unified structure (Gao *et al.*, 2021). Consumers may shop anywhere and get the same information on their desktops, laptops, smartphones, tablets, and social networking sites. Technology has enabled consistent, seamless communication across all of these mediums (Juaneda-Ayensa *et al.*, 2016; Khoa & Huynh, 2023). The importance of technology is widely discussed in the omnichannel literature (Mason & Knights, 2019; Mosquera *et al.*, 2018) but not often in the context of customers' perceptions and customer experience. In-store systems, online shops, mobile applications, and information technology infrastructure are all part of omnichannel commerce (Gao *et al.*, 2021; Knezevic *et al.*, 2021). The success of omnichannel retailing can be attributed in large part to the ways in which technological developments (such as AI, the Internet of Things, augmented reality, virtual reality, and blockchain) have helped to blur the lines between traditional brick-and-mortar stores and their online counterparts and completely revamp the shopping experience for consumers (Cai & Lo, 2020; Teo & Quek, 2022). For example, big data and machine learning may help businesses analyze consumer preferences and behaviors to produce personalized products and suggestions across numerous touchpoints, ultimately improving the customer experience (Pereira *et al.*, 2018). Customers may also benefit from the immersive nature of augmented and virtual reality experiences. Despite the fact that studies have been undertaken to examine the dynamic connection between technology and consumers (Flavián *et al.*, 2016), as well as retailers' adoption of technology in omnichannel retailing (Hickman *et al.*, 2020), little has been done to synthesize the current body of knowledge concerning omnichannel technology.

This study is based on the technology acceptance model (TAM) to investigate the impact of in-store and out-store technologies on customer perception and lead to customer purchase intention through an omnichannel system. In conclusion, this research contributes theoretically by exploring the omnichannel consumer shopping experience in the fashion business. This article describes research on the relationships between customers' perceptions of retail technology and their omnichannel shopping behaviors in the apparel industry. The 424 participants were interviewed using a questionnaire. The embedded structural model was then used to verify the assumptions. The essay was broken down into four pieces (introduction, literature review, techniques, discussion, and conclusion) to accomplish this. This article's research fills a need in our understanding of how other countries' economies see customer behavior and the efficacy of omnichannel designs' underlying technologies. Managers in the retail fashion industry might also gain from this study. It sets standards for the technological infrastructures used in omnichannel strategy.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Omnichannel

Changes in how stores interact with their consumers have been dramatic due to the advent of digitalization (Khoa & Huynh, 2023). Omnichannel retailing is a business strategy in which all available channels are used as "hybrid contact points" to influence customers' final purchasing choices. This unified approach to customer service utilizes many channels to produce a unified and customer-centric experience across the board (Furquim *et al.*, 2022; Tien *et al.*, 2020). The key to successful omnichannel commerce is integrated management of the many customer contact points to optimize the customer experience across all interactions. At the same time, an actual omnichannel strategy is singularly focused on consumer value throughout their buying experiences (Gao *et al.*, 2021). Kang (2019) backed up this idea and dug into how omnichannel fashion merchants use shopping features to build a loyal client base. The research evaluated the channel consolidation procedure and recommended that merchants keep their clients aware of the advantages of employing various channels. Herrero-Crespo *et al.* (2021) found that knowing what your customers want and expect is the foundation of a successful omnichannel strategy. Since various consumers have varied needs, creating unique client profiles is necessary to implement an efficient omnichannel strategy and standardize the customer experience. More recent research also suggests emphasizing customer experience aspects that drive customers in the correct way. As a result, more work must be done on the idea of omnichannel commerce to reflect the technological experience from omnichannel system accurately.

2.2. Research hypotheses development

The TAM analyzes how various elements of the environment affect consumers' perceptions, opinions, and decisions about adopting new technology (Davis, 1989). It emphasizes the importance of perceived utility and simplicity of use in the general public's acceptance of technical advances. The former is defined as the level to which a potential user expects that using the technology would not require effort, while the latter is associated with the degree to which the individual believes that adopting a certain system will improve the performance of a task. According to the TAM, the behavioral intention to use a new system or technology is primarily influenced by two antecedents: the perceived utility of the system or technology and its ease of use. According to the paradigm, value is positively impacted by how simple something is to use.

Research has shown that the TAM is the most effective model for studying available information systems and e-commerce (Wu & Song, 2021). Prior investigations have generally validated the critical linkages stated by the theoretical model in e-commerce behaviors. There has been little research on applying this theoretical framework to omnichannel shopping modes, notably in the fashion industry. A conceptual framework of web rooming acceptance based on the TAM was developed by Arora and Sahney (2017), although it was not experimentally tested. Showrooming intentions were shown to be positively influenced by perceived utility, which in turn is influenced by perceived ease of use, although the authors did not conduct a formal investigation into the link between the two. Last, Arora and Sahney (2019) found that perceived usefulness and ease of use positively influenced web rooming attitudes. Consequently, there is little solid information about the impact of these characteristics on the propensity to engage in web rooming and showrooming behaviors. No research cited above explicitly addresses the fashion industry, making this a much more significant gap in literature.

Therefore, in line with the more prevalent TAM conceptualization, this study proposed that consumers' perceived usefulness and ease of use of the omnichannel system in the fashion industry directly influenced the intention to use the omnichannel system (Yen *et al.*, 2022). Customers will only employ web rooming or showrooming if they believe it will serve their needs, and the time commitment

will be low. Customers will engage in web rooming and showrooming because they believe these omnichannel behaviors provide more convenience and value than offline or online buying. As a result, this research put up the following hypotheses:

H1. The perceived usefulness of the omnichannel system positively influences the intention to use the omnichannel system.

H2. The perceived ease of use of the omnichannel system positively influences the intention to use the omnichannel system.

H3. The perceived ease of use of the omnichannel system positively influences the perceived usefulness of the omnichannel system.

Two aspects, in-store and online, are prioritized when developing a typology of new technologies from the consumer's point of view in retail (Furquim et al., 2022), which may be considered while formulating omnichannel strategies (Verhoef et al., 2015). In-store technology aids in the design of a welcoming space and will raise customer happiness and improve the shopping experience for the customer (Bèzes, 2019). Evidence from retail technology suggests that eroding barriers between traditional store ambiance and digitally enhanced customer experiences might boost revenues by luring more customers to points of sale. New retail layouts, including displays like store-ordering hubs, tablets, and screens, make things easier to find and purchase (Alexander & Kent, 2022). An integrated environment is provided by retail applications and automated checkouts, which include scan-and-go technology. They alter conventional store layouts, making purchases quicker. Retailers and manufacturers may broaden their product selection to better meet the demands of their customers by using digital signals, beacons, and retail applications to provide entertainment and supplementary data (Quach et al., 2022). Intelligent mirrors may transform into a fitting room, and bright fitting rooms are social network-connected and include augmented reality. These provide a new level to the shopping experience by providing amenities like ease, calm, and sociability. The following vital hypotheses may be made considering the significance of in-store technology in developing novel sales structures for omnichannel retail:

H4. In-store technology positively influences the perceived ease of use of omnichannel systems.

H5. In-store technology positively influences the perceived usefulness of omnichannel systems.

In the fashion sector, where customers' dissatisfaction may result from their inability to try on garments before purchasing them online (Khoa et al., 2020), technologies that facilitate online sales are paramount. The capabilities of e-commerce platforms and mobile apps are growing to rival those of traditional businesses. Offline cues like scent and touch are replaced with online ones like color, music, and light to heighten the consumer's enjoyment (Kawaf & Tagg, 2012). The use of virtual try-on spaces in Internet retail is another recent development. The chance to try the thing on makes buying online less intimidating (Alexander & Kent, 2022). Customers may design models using photographs, providing information about their height and weight, using technology used in virtual fitting rooms. They may also choose the items they want to try based on a live reflection recording. The more a store knows about its consumers' tastes, the more tailored the deals they can provide. The following hypothesis may be made in light of the impact that technology outside of stores has on the omnichannel customer journey:

H6. Out-store technology positively influences the perceived ease of use of omnichannel systems.

H7. Out-store technology positively influences the perceived usefulness of omnichannel systems.

Hence, this study proposed the research model in Figure 1.

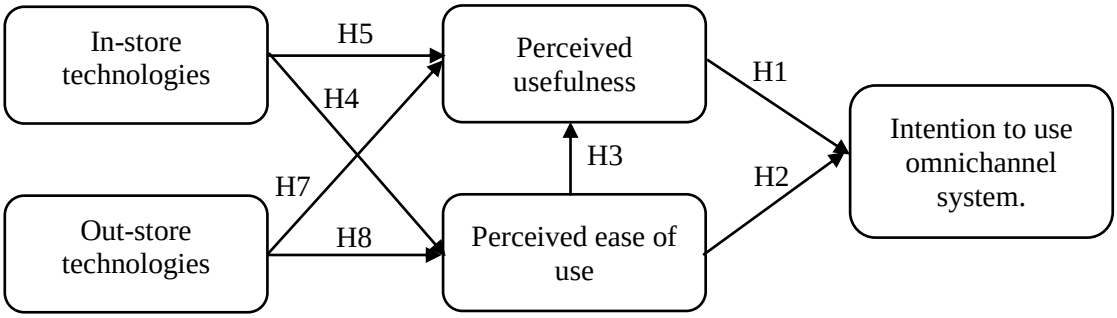

Figure 1. Theoretical model

3. Methodology

The theories were put to the test using quantitative analysis. Two separate online surveys were used to obtain information on web rooming and in-store browsing. Each questionnaire had a short explanation to ensure responders could easily understand the questions. Specifically, the model's variables were represented in both surveys and tailored to the relevant behaviors.

Content validity was ensured by measuring all variables using multi-attribute instruments based on prior research. This study used the 5-point Likert scale to measure the research construct. Since behavioral intention has been previously identified in the general literature on consumer behavior and prior research on innovation adoption, it was chosen as the dependent variable for this study. Based on their research, Venkatesh and Davis (2000) created the measures for intent to use an omnichannel system (3 items), perceived ease of use (4 items), and perceived usefulness (4 items). The in-store technologies and out-stored technologies scale measurement are adopted from Herrero-Crespo et al. (2021)

Customers of both online and traditional retailers were included in this study. The sample was chosen using a non-probabilistic process, and possible informants were selected using a simple sampling technique while they shopped at various locations. On-site interviews with prospective sources were done at the respondents' convenience. The research was done through a confidential survey in several cities and regions in Vietnam. Each case sample was selected independently, and participants completed just one questionnaire, proving that the observations were unrelated. The interviewees were assured of complete anonymity and the secrecy of their responses from the outset. There were 385 valid replies from the showrooming sample and 462 valid responses from our web rooming sample. In Table 1, the demographics of the collected samples were presented in terms of age, education level, and gender.

Table 1. Demographics of respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	216	50.9
	Female	208	49.1
Age	18-25	89	21.0
	26-35	125	29.5
	36-45	102	24.1
	Over 45	108	25.5
Education level	Ungraduated	182	42.9
	Bachelor/Engineer	207	48.8
	Master	20	4.7
	Doctor	15	3.5

In total, 424 responses were collected. The sample characteristic is 50.9% female and 49.1% male. The age distribution of the respondents is 18–25 (21%), 26–35 (24.1%), and over 45 (25.5%). Related to

education level, bachelor/engineer included 207 respondents (48.8%), and 182 students took part in the survey (42.9%). No statistical differences existed between gender, age group, and education level.

4. Results

SmartPLS 3 was used for the statistical analysis. The researchers began by checking the measurement model for reliability and validity by looking at its convergent and discriminant properties. Each of the five constructions had a CR that was more than the minimum acceptable value of 0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Out-of-store technologies had a CR of 0.88, while perceived ease of use was 0.945. (see Table 2). All of our developed constructs also passed the typical tests of convergent and discriminant validity at this point, proving their validity as well as the construct validity as a whole. The AVE criteria of 0.5 were suggested for each component. The outside loading of each item was also more than 0.70. Convergent validity was achieved for all constructs according to the data in Table 2. Using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations statistics (Hair Jr *et al.*, 2016), this current study checked for discriminant validity and found that there were no highly correlated constructs, indicating that their goal of establishing independence between variables had been met (see Table 3).

Table 2. Summary of outer loading, CR, CA, AVE, R^2, f^2, Q^2

Item	Outer loading					CA	CR	AVE
	IST	***ITU***	***OST***	***PEoU***	***PUN***			
IST1	0.931					0.834	0.923	0.858
IST2	0.922							
ITU1		0.931				0.869	0.92	0.793
ITU2		0.897						
ITU3		0.842						
OST1			0.851			0.797	0.88	0.71
OST2			0.835					
OST3			0.842					
PEoU1				0.906		0.923	0.945	0.813
PEoU2				0.900				
PEoU3				0.924				
PEoU4				0.876				
PUN1					0.906	0.869	0.911	0.72
PUN2					0.798			
PUN3					0.819			
PUN4					0.866			
$R^2_{ITU} = 0.440$, $R^2_{PEoU} = 0.343$, $R^2_{PUN} = 0.634$								
$f^2_{IST->PEoU} = 0.147$, $f^2_{IST->PUN} = 0.428$, $f^2_{OST->PEoU} = 0.17$, $f^2_{OST->PUN} = 0.114$, $f^2_{PEoU->ITU} = 0.212$, $f^2_{PEoU->PUN} = 0.146$, $f^2_{PUN->ITU} = 0.091$.								
$Q^2_{ITU} = 0.340$, $Q^2_{PEoU} = 0.273$, $Q^2_{PUN} = 0.445$.								

Table 3. HTMT result

Construct	HTMT				VIF		
	IST	***ITU***	***OST***	***PEoU***	***ITU***	***PEoU***	***PUN***
IST						1.184	1.184
ITU	0.633						
OST	0.479	0.584				1.184	1.184
PEoU	0.548	0.692	0.573		1.645		
PUN	0.811	0.649	0.673	0.698	1.645		

To begin evaluating the structural model, we looked at the VIF values, which, if more than 3, indicate multicollinearity between the components. There is no multicollinearity since the highest VIF was 1.645. Cross-validated redundancy values Q2 in Table 2 were all more than the required threshold of zero, demonstrating the model's predictive accuracy, and an omission distance of seven was used in a blind approach to evaluate the model's predictive capability. Table 2's f2 values indicated that latent elements, notably in-store technology, had a significant impact on consumers' opinions of their value. ($f^2_{IST->PUN} = 0.428$). The R^2 values allow concluding that the model has adequate in-sample predictive power. In this research, a 44% variance of intention to use the omnichannel system for shopping for fashion products was explained by perceived ease of use and usefulness ($R^2_{ITU} = 0.440$). In-store technology and Out-store technology also explained the change in perceived ease of use and usefulness, respectively, 34.3% ($R^2_{PEoU} = 0.343$) and 63.4% ($R^2_{PUN} = 0.634$).

The assessment of the path coefficient in Table 4 indicates that perceived usefulness (beta = 0.290, t-value = 4.892, p-value = 0.000) and perceived ease of use (beta = 0.442, t-value = 7.534, p-value = 0.000) have a positive impact on intention to use the omnichannel system for fashion products purchasing; therefore, hypotheses H1 and H2 are supported. Hypothesis H3 is accepted as perceived ease of use positively affects the perceived usefulness (beta = 0.285, t-value = 5.878, p-value = 0.000).

In-store technology positively and significantly impacts perceived usefulness (beta = 0.461, t-value = 12.915, p-value = 0.000) and perceived ease of use (beta = 0.338, t-value = 6.286, p-value = 0.000), supporting H4 and H5. Finally, there is strong evidence that consumers' opinions of Out-of-store technologies' usefulness (beta = 0.24, t-value = 5.573, p-value = 0.000) and ease of use (beta = 0.363, t-value = 5.908, p-value = 0.000) are positively affected.

Table 4. The hypothesis testing result

Relationship	Beta	t-value	Hypothesis	Result
PUN -> ITU	0.29	4.892	H1	Supported
PEoU -> ITU	0.442	7.534	H2	Supported
PEoU -> PUN	0.285	5.878	H3	Supported
IST -> PEoU	0.338	6.286	H4	Supported
IST -> PUN	0.461	12.915	H5	Supported
OST -> PUN	0.24	5.573	H7	Supported
OST -> PEoU	0.363	5.908	H8	Supported

5. Conclusions

In the context of the fashion industry and omnichannel systems, perceived usefulness relates to customers' perception of how beneficial and valuable these systems are for their purchasing experiences. Customers who perceive omnichannel systems as applicable believe using them will provide them with advantages such as convenience, personalized recommendations, product information, and a seamless shopping experience across different channels.

Several studies have shown a positive relationship between perceived usefulness and intention to use omnichannel systems for fashion product purchasing. For instance, a study by Mosquera *et al.* (2019) investigated consumer adoption of omnichannel shopping in the fashion industry. The results revealed a strong positive association between the perceived usefulness of omnichannel systems and consumers' intention to use them. Similarly, a study conducted by Herrero-Crespo *et al.* (2021) found that perceived usefulness significantly influenced consumers' intention to use omnichannel systems, highlighting the importance of this factor in shaping consumers' adoption behaviors.

Perceived ease of use is another critical factor influencing consumers' intention to use omnichannel systems. It refers to how consumers perceive these systems as easy to understand, learn, and navigate. Customers who find omnichannel systems easy to use are more likely to adopt and engage with them. Research in the fashion industry supports the positive relationship between perceived ease of use and intention to use omnichannel systems. For example, a study by Chaudhary *et al.* (2022) investigated consumer acceptance of omnichannel fashion retailing. The findings revealed that perceived ease of use significantly influenced consumers' intention to use omnichannel systems.

Similarly, a study by Kopot and Cude (2021) found that perceived ease of use was positively associated with consumers' intention to use omnichannel systems, highlighting the importance of designing user-friendly interfaces and intuitive functionalities.

More and more clothing businesses are switching to omnichannel order fulfillment, which combines in-store and online purchasing into a streamlined customer experience (Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014). This means allowing consumers to pick up orders in the shop and transforming the stores into distribution facilities. In contrast to multichannel and cross-channel commerce, which only allow for partial channel integration and interaction, omnichannel fulfillment for merchants involves sales overall accessible channels, benefiting both the consumer and the company (Beck & Rygl, 2015). Since omnichannel fulfillment removes barriers across online, mobile, and brick-and-mortar channels, businesses have more opportunities to analyze and shape consumers' procrastination and reactions to stockouts. Omnichannel retail aims to provide a consistent and seamless experience across all channels. Research given in this article shows that clients who utilize web rooming and showrooming often employ technology outside of the shop to complete their purchases. Szozda (2023) corroborated the hypothesis that consumers utilize technology outside of stores to inform their purchasing decisions before visiting an omnichannel shop, known as showrooming or webrooming.

It is essential to use caution when extrapolating from these data. There are still open doubts about the precise use of each touchpoint and the level of their overlap, despite the study's value in illustrating the causative components of omnichannel consumer experience. This limitation raises questions about the value of omnichannel drivers, which requires further research. We recommend further investigation into the impact of other variables on omnichannel, such as store type and customer satisfaction history. Moderating aspects of an omnichannel experience, such as in-store incentives or social impacts, should be investigated by future academics.

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