

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS THROUGH OMNICHANNEL RETAILING

Bhavana Sharma

Assistant Professor

Lloyd Institute of Management & Technology, Greater Noida

Email: infobhav289@gmail.com

Dr. Shikha Aggarwal

Assistant Professor

Institute of Technology & Science, Ghaziabad

Monika Kadam

Assistant Professor

Lloyd Institute of Management & Technology, Greater Noida

Email: monika.kadam@lloydbusinessschool.edu.in

Pooja Sharma

Assistant Professor

Lloyd Institute of Management & Technology, Greater Noida

Email: pooja.sharma@lloydbusinessschool.edu.in

ABSTRACT

The retail business is evolving rapidly, and this is happening as a result of changes in consumer demand and behavior. Omnichannel has transformed traditional retailing in every manner. It also altered the consumer's behavior, as they use more than one channel and different touchpoint throughout their purchasing journey now, than they did earlier. Numerous researchers and academics have also indicated that the seamlessness is one of the distinctive and significant characteristics of the omnichannel that, in comparison to other elements, has the greatest impact on consumer behavior. Moreover, in today's informed and educated markets, consumers are more than aware and sensitive towards sustainability and environment- friendly practices and hence, increased pressure is being faced by companies to incorporate green practices, not just in production and manufacturing, but also in operations and supply chain activities. The concept of omnichannel is still in its preliminary stages of development which formed the groundwork for the primary goal of this research, i.e., to understand the omnichannel retailing. Furthermore, the article aimed to gain an understanding of the diverse elements that influence omnichannel retailing. Lastly, the study aimed to identify the contributions of omnichannel retailing towards sustainable business development. Systematic review of literature was adopted as the

methodology employed in the present work and most of the insights in the paper were obtained from secondary sources published between January 2015 and December 2022. The significant addition of this work is to the advancement and improvement of knowledge in the areas of omnichannel retailing and its contribution towards sustainable business development.

Keywords: *omnichannel, omnichannel retailing, omnichannel commerce, systematic literature review, sustainable business.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The retail business is evolving rapidly, and this is happening as a result of changes in consumer demand and behaviour. Rapid technological advancements are another reason for the speedy progression of the retail sector worldwide (Sousa et al, 2021). Radzevičė et al, 2020, contributed the swift advancement in ICT also have had a major influence on and changed the dynamics of retailing. These days, retailers are having a very difficult time maintaining competitive advantages (Sousa et al, 2021). The rate of profit growth for retail stores is being slowed by the fact that consumers are now shopping more online than they are in physical stores (Hsiao et al, 2012). It has become imperative for retailers to have various plans and strategies in place in order to preserve and grow their businesses in this cutthroat business environment (Von Briel, 2018). Many experts and scholars concentrated on describing how omnichannel is crucial for retailer performance and how it aids in creating and maintaining long-term consumer relationships with retailers. (Rigby, 2011, Manser Payne et al., 2017). Omnichannel is a recent trend in retail that is altering the industry by linking and integrating all of the touchpoints that customers might utilize, resulting in a holistic and unified experience (Mishra et al 2021). According to Verhoef et al. (2015), omnichannel is the management and integration of all customer touchpoints in such a way that the customer experience and channel performance are optimized.

Fig. 1: Omnichannel Retailing concept and scope



Hole et al., 2019, suggested that omnichannel retailing uses cross-channel strategy to integrate and align user experience through improved communication, designed to assist and cooperate. Consequently, omnichannel supersedes multiple channels like physical retail, mobile shopping, e-commerce, and social media, to enhance value to the customer and engage them with multiple avenues.

Numerous researchers and academics have also indicated that the seamlessness is one of the distinctive and significant characteristics of the omnichannel that, in comparison to other elements, has the greatest impact on consumer behaviour (Zhang et al, 2018, Dahl et al., 2018; Hoehle et al., 2018;). Muñoz-Villamizar, A et. al, 2021, suggested that customers have begun to consider omnichannel retailing as an imperative of businesses rather than a competitive advantage, ultimately, pushing companies to adopt and implement it in the most efficient and effective manner. Moreover, in today's informed and educated markets, consumers are more than aware and sensitive towards sustainability and environment-friendly practices. Wang, Z., 2018; Yenipazarli, A. 2019, concluded that increased pressure is being faced by companies to incorporate green practices, not just in production and manufacturing, but also in operations and supply chain activities. When talking about sustainable practices on retailer's end, reducing the negative environmental impact through supply chain management is the key. Moreover, the modern consumer is willing to alter and improve their shopping preferences with the objective of supporting companies focussing on social and environmental issues. This can help retailers' design and implement niche strategy to approach and expand such customer base. (De Sousa et al., 2021).

There are still numerous open questions that need to be answered despite the fact that many scholars and Researcher are currently working on and researching this omnichannel domain (Shi et al, 2020). Additional research in this area will assist to build a deeper understanding of omnichannel, as well as stimulate more scholars and researchers to conduct additional research on this field. For instant past studies has focused on the creating conceptual knowledge of the omnichannel (Taylor et. al,2019), strategies for implementing the omnichannel in retailing (Hoogveld et al.,2016) factors that affecting omnichannel, understanding perception related to omnichannel services (Juaneda-Ayensa et al., 2016; Shen et al; 2018., Kazancoglu & Aydin., 2018). Present research uses the structural review technique in an effort to better comprehend the omnichannel by drawing inspiration from the aforementioned trends and areas. This study will assist researchers and scholars in a number of ways. It will aid in the development of a deeper understanding of omnichannel. It will explain the elements that influence the smooth functioning of omnichannel retailing. Educating readers about omnichannel retailing and its application extending towards sustainable business development is the main objective of this study. This paper also aims to explore the various factors that impact omnichannel retailing and to examine the ways in which omnichannel strategies contribute to sustainable business growth.

This paper is broken up into multiple sections: The first section detailed the purpose of this paper by highlighting the relevance of the concept of omnichannel towards sustainable and green business. Next section explains about the concept of omnichannel and the factors which help in smooth functioning of omnichannel retailing in form of literature review and how omnichannel strategies contribute to sustainable business growth. Furthermore, in the paper, the details of the research methodology undertaken, in this study is systematic literature review, are described, followed by the results and discussion of the findings. After presenting key trends and important takeaways, the paper concludes by offering several fruitful research directions and recommendations to help scholars interested in this area with their future work. Lastly, the paper includes a list of references.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Systematic review of literature has numerous types such as structured review,

framework-based review, Bibliometric review and Meta analytical review. Systematic literature review is the best and most appropriate strategy for the present article, as per the aims of the article which is majorly to gain an widespread understanding of the omnichannel concept in retailing, by recognizing trends and research gaps and thereby suggesting future scope for subsequent research (Canabal & White, 2008, Paul & Singh, 2017; Kahiya, 2018; Rosado-Serrano et al., 2018; Paul and Feliciano-Cestero, 2020). We followed a three-step strategy to implement the systematic research methodology. Selecting database, journals and keywords is the initial step. Different research papers are screened in the second phase. The final phase provides information on the findings and results.

2.1 Step 1: Selection of Database, Journals and Keywords

Our study started with searching and downloading research papers from Google Scholar and other online databases like Research Gate and Web of Science. "Omnichannel," "omnichannel retailing," "omnichannel consumers," "omnichannel commerce," "omnichannel factors," "omnichannel implementation," "omnichannel consumer behaviour," factors affecting omnichannel ", "omnichannel enables", "omnichannel supportive factors", "traditional retailing", "multichannel retailing", "cross channel retailing", ", "omnichannel and sustainability", ", "omnichannel retailing and sustainable business practices" are some of the buzzwords used during this phase. The sources that are most frequently used are Research Gate and Web of Science. Web of Science, has been a preferred choice due to frequent usage in other documented work (Bunga Bangsa & Schlegelmilch, 2020), wide coverage of peer-reviewed papers (Li et al., 2010), and the convenience of search options better and more refined than any other databases (Prieto-Sandoval et al., 2016). For this paper, we mostly used peer-reviewed journals such as, Sustainability, Journal of Cleaner Production, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, International Journal of Consumer Studies, Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management, Advances in Management and Applied Economics, International Business Review International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management and many more.

2.2 Step 2: Selection of Research Papers:

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In 1997, Sandelowski et al. provided an initial analysis that is crucial for comprehending the overall direction of the selected studies used in the research analysis. A preliminary review protocol, which is referenced in Table 1, is employed for this purpose. In order to narrow the scope of our research, the authors choose publications that were published between January 2015 and December 2022. Peer review journals were our primary source for screening and selecting research papers. Literature published in journals and in English language were chosen, mainly, for the sake of comprehension and logical flow. To begin with, research based on keywords for the selection of journal papers was performed (Paul & Criado, 2020). The search excluded any document that were published in books, working papers, dissertations, or conference proceedings. For the purpose of final selection, each article abstract was diligently examined, followed by complete text, resulting in the outcome of only those papers that primarily addressed our central ideas that is omnichannel selling, sustainability and consumer trustworthiness.

Bibliographic Data Details	Description
Author(s)	Name of the Author/(s)
Year of Publication	In which year the article published?
Journal	Name and others detail of the journal where the article has been published.
Nature/ Type of Publication	In terms of methodology what type of articles are included?
Data collection	What methods, tools and techniques has been used for collecting data.
Major Themes	Does the articles provide insights about omnichannel, omnichannel retailing and omnichannel sustainability.

Table 1: Review Protocol (Source: Stechemesser, K., & Guenther, E. (2012))

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The majority of the research papers chosen for the current systematic literature

review were read and thoroughly examined in this step. This part will provide an explanation of the literature review that is currently accessible, the year of publication, and the findings of the articles that are relevant to the concept, provide a better knowledge of the notion of omnichannel and the elements influencing omnichannel establishment or can say simply transition from traditional to omnichannel retailing.



Fig. 2 Research Method (Source: Authors Own)

3.1 Omnichannel: A concept

Nowadays, there are a lot of people who use technology, and that number is growing daily. Because of new developments and enhancements in digital tools and platforms, the need for technology is quite high (Behera et al, 2020) Businesses are now realising that using technology as a tool for better communication will open up and give new freedom and opportunities for them to grow and flourish (Soares et al., 2022). To learn more about products and services before making a purchase, one reason why consumers are turning to technology is to give them more authority and power (Goraya et al., 2020). The number of customer touchpoints that consumers can use to communicate with service providers is rapidly increasing, which has fundamentally changed the buying ecosystem for the customer (Viejo et al., 2019). Due to technological advancements, online retailers prompted traditional retailers to adapt their business model by adding online retailing activities (Buldeo et al, 2019). Even now, internet stores are attempting to develop physical locations in order to gain both offline and online market share (Rosengren 2018). This strategy gave rise to a new retail paradigm called as omnichannel retailing (Buldeo et al .2019). This type of model includes both offline retailing (physical store) and as well as online store (website, mobile app etc). One of the biggest advancements in the retail industry is omnichannel retailing (Verhoef et al., 2015). Omnichannel retailers are growing in popularity, and consumers enjoy the unique shopping experience of being able to shop both offline and online from

the same retailer (Bell et al., 2018). All operations required for selling items through several channels and customer touchpoints—through which a customer can get in touch and meet with a retailer (virtually or physically)—are referred to as omnichannel retailing. (Beck and Rygl, 2015). Saghiri et al. (2017) define omnichannel retailing as a structure that includes numerous channels for product research and inquiries, product comparisons, purchases, and post-sale services, with smooth channel switching for the consumer. During the consumer journey, omnichannel marketing refers to mixing and integrating all customer touch points and channels (Neslin, 2022). According to Lynch and Barnes (2020), omnichannel retailing is a business model related to the retail that utilises several channels and touch point, including both physical and digital ones, to facilitate seamless and easy buying experiences at every touchpoint to the consumer. In the interest of providing a congruent customer experience, Peltola et al. (2015) state that omnichannel requires the integration of all available channels and touch points. The omnichannel purchasing process is divided into five stages, each with a different action performed by the consumer (Schoutteet et al, 2017). The first step is to conduct product research (Schoutteet et al, 2017). The testing stage comes next (Schoutteet et al, 2017). In the first and second stages, consumers conduct product research and testing via webrooming or showrooming. In Webrooming, customers conduct online product research before testing or purchasing the goods in a physical store. Showrooming is a practise in which customers conduct offline research and testing on products before purchasing them online. The third stage is purchase, in which the consumer pays for the product (Schoutteet et al, 2017). At this point, customers can use either online or offline. Receiving the product is the fourth stage. Consumers can receive the items via home delivery or in-store purchasing. If the customer does not like the product, the final stage is to return it (Schoutteet et al, 2017). At this point, customers can choose to return their merchandise in-store or at home.

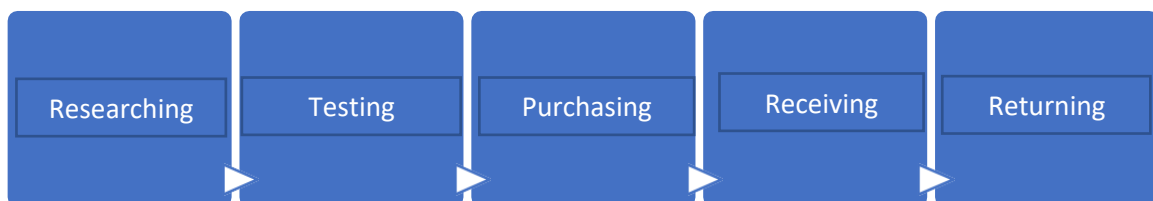


Fig. 3 Process of Omnichannel Purchasing (Source: (Schoutteet et al, 2017))

3.2 Factors influencing the implementing Omnichannel retailing

"Omnichannel," "Omnichannel factors," "Omnichannel Enables," and "Omnichannel Supports Variables" are the primary keywords used to identify those papers that feature factors that are influencing retailers to adopt omnichannel commerce. Multiple papers having the same factors were chosen in order to compare their veracity. We were able to identify important variables that promote and have an impact on the adoption of omnichannel retailing after doing comprehensive study and review. Tech is the first factor. In the process of omnichannel adoption, technology is crucial. Technology provides solutions to problems that retailers confront today, such as the distribution of physical items (Ye et al, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). By introducing new opportunities and delivering a seamless customer experience at each point of contact, technology is transforming traditional retailing into hitech retailing (Larke et al., 2018; Cao and Li, 2018). The ability to trace the product and ensure transparency are both beneficial to the consumer (Hubner et al., 2016; Mosquera et al., 2018). Data and analytics on consumers are another aspect of omnichannel retailing. According to Tyrvaiven and Karjaluoto (2019), consumer activities during the omnichannel purchase journey generate a lot of data about the consumer's purchasing habits, decision-making processes, and factors that influence those decisions. This data is used by retailers to forecast and predict consumer behaviour in the future.

Retailers who want to use omnichannel platforms need to have better understand about their customers by using advanced analysis, which also helps them decide what better omnichannel services to provide them and keep them as customers (Ye et al., 2018). Similar and unified information is a next factor. To provide a seamless experience, it is necessary to have consistent and similar information about goods across all channels, such as price, availability, payment method, size, colour, and design (Peltola et al., 2015). Similar information fosters collaboration across all channels (Mishra, 2020). Similar data across all culture across all channels, all conflict and inefficiency must be eliminated (Wollenburg et al., 2018). Financial commitment is the following element. Money is needed to build omnichannel processes, software, architecture, infrastructure, and platforms, among other things (Chopra, 2016). For the switch from traditional commerce to omnichannel retailing, solid finances are necessary (Kersmark and Staflund, 2015). It also needs money for things like maintaining real-time access

to inventory, for product, for warehouse management, for delivering products on time, training and enhancing skills of employees, etc (Ye et al., 2018). Additionally, it supports innovation in omnichannel retailing and aids in risk management (Mishra, 2020).

Logistics makes up the last component. Transportation of commodities from one location to another is called logistics. One of the things that boosts customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is on-time product delivery. The implementation of efficient logistics management will ensure a seamless customer experience across all touchpoints for omnichannel retailers (Peltola et al., 2015). Based on the type of goods and consumer, logistics services should be provided (Mishra, 2020). Numerous techniques, including one-day delivery, are available in the logistics system to improve the performance and efficiency of Omnichannel retailing (Wollenburg et al., 2018). channel's aids omnichannel retailers in understanding and forecasting consumer behaviour as well as in being proactive (Staflund and Kersmark, 2015). Customer relationship management has its own positive impact on the retailer's decision to maintain omnichannel. The ability to satisfy client needs and demands is facilitated by strong customer relationships for retailers (Mishra, 2020).

Retailers will be able to create and sustain strong customer relationships thanks to the abundance of consumer data. Abundances data is required for maintain the omnichannel system (Mishra, 2020). Another aspect that influences retailers to manage omnichannel selling is interactive and integrated communication. One of the key criteria for managing the omnichannel is the unification of related information. It raises the likelihood of a positive customer experience and raises consumer engagement (Manser Payne et al., 2017). According to Mishra (2020), omnichannel retailers must create harmony across all touchpoints because doing so would help to increase consumer engagement. Stock management is another element that affects omnichannel retailing. No matter if a store has a brick-and-click or an omnichannel business strategy, stock management is a highly difficult process.

Management of the retailer's necessary amount of inventory, as well as stock keeping and decision-making, is included in stock or assortment management (Hubner et al., 2016). Online retailers can readily offer a wide selection of products and have lower

storage costs, but they have less physical room than offline retailers to hold the full range of products (Mishra 2020). Therefore, omnichannel retailing requires stock management to perform more effectively (Mishra 2020). Training and skills are two additional elements that are crucial for the development of an effective omnichannel retailing system. One of the current key prerequisites for omnichannel retailing is training and skill development (Mishra 2020). Skills and training are needed, especially by traditional retailers, for the better transfer and administration of the omnichannel system (Picot-Coupey et al., 2016). It takes advanced technologies and advanced expertise to manage client interactions online, changes in the retail experience, and store layout (Chen et al., 2018).

A qualified and skillful workforce is needed by the organisation to transition from traditional to omnichannel retailing (Lapoule and Colla, 2016). Organizational structure that supports omnichannel retailing is a further component in the adoption and management of omnichannel systems. Top to down management is one of the best methods for managing an omnichannel system, according to Mishra (2020). If the organisation does not adopt a top-down strategy, it will be impossible to administer and sustain an omnichannel system (Wollenburg et al., 2018). For the organisation to foster a positive collaborative

3.3 Omnichannel and Sustainable business building

Sustainable business processes can be supported by the retailing sector via adopting omnichannel strategies. It ensures lessened number of physical stores, limited inventory and, most importantly, consumer awareness towards sustainability (De Sousa et al., 2021; Adivar, B. et al. 2019). Omnichannel retailing strategies, specifically, will be able to target transportation and logistics related unsustainable practices in retailing. Giuffrida, M. et al., 2019, suggested that click and collect model of retailing causes lesser CO₂ emissions than the traditional in-store shopping format. Additionally, it reduces frequency of empty drive, rate of average truck- fill is increased with reduced emission of greenhouse gases (Lafkihi, M., Pan, S., & Ballot, E., 2019). Consequently, omnichannel selling can contribute in lowered carbon footprint, especially associated with shopping- linked travels. Jaller, M., & Pahwa, A., 2020, suggested easier accessibility of information about products and services and better delivery options

(Adivar, B., Hüseyinoğlu, I. Ö. Y., & Christopher, M., 2019). Yadav, Tripathi & Singh, 2018, concluded, from an Indian standpoint, the supply chain network in omnichannel design environment provide a unique advantage to customers as they are able to utilize and access any product and service as per their requirement and enhance their accessibility, convenience, and satisfaction.

4. CONCLUSION

The significant addition of this work is to the advancement and improvement of knowledge in the areas of omnichannel and omnichannel retailing. This research makes an attempt to understand the concept of omnichannel and omnichannel retailing with the aid of a systematic literature review. The reasons that contribution and addition to the development and maintenance of omnichannel retailing are also discussed in this paper along with how traditional retailing can be transformed into it. By analysing the vast literature, the article present identified factors that are crucial for creating management and upholding omnichannel retailing, including the right and advanced technologies, finances, organisational structure, good customer relationship management, unified information, good stock management system, and logistics management system. Additionally, the article also gathers benefits of using omnichannel shopping from customer standpoint, which assist the customers in enhancing shopping experience by enabling them to remain in regular contact with the brand via multiple avenues simultaneously. This in turn helps the business to attain customer loyalty (Wasserman, 2015). The key drawback of the study is that a very limited number of papers—those published between January 2015 and December 2022—were chosen. Total numbers of papers used in this research are 25.

The present paper focuses solely on the idea of omnichannel and the elements that provide a seamless change from traditional retailing to omnichannel retailing. However, the article does talk about the importance of building sustainable business using omnichannel shopping avenues, it lacks discussion on the consumer behaviour that he or she exhibits when choosing an omnichannel channel brand. Hence, elements like as customer perception, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty, towards omnichannel shopping can be explored. Future studies should also consider researching on challenges and impediments in implementation of omnichannel. For instance, a technology- related challenge such as privacy can be of high impact while

choosing an omnichannel business model. Reason being, the concept of omnichannel retailing largely integrating dissimilar and multiple channels of customer touchpoints, which comprises sharing of customers' data, making privacy and security quite crucial factors that need to be understood in omnichannel environments (Dwivedi, Y.K, 2020).

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