

Mapping the Omni-Channel Consumer Journey: A Systematic Review of Behavioral Intentions, Channel Choices, and Preferences

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study provides an overview of how a systematic literature review (SLR) is used to identify relevant literature on consumers' behavioral in adopting the OMNI-Channel platforms. It outlines the SLR process, including source identification, research question formulation, systematic searching strategies, article quality appraisal, and data extraction and analysis.

Design/methodology/approach – A systematic approach was employed using three major databases. After applying eligibility criteria, 35 relevant articles were shortlisted from an initial pool of 94 papers.

Findings – Of the 94 initially identified papers, 77 were closely aligned to the topic which 62 contributed directly to the research framework and 15 articles focused on OMNI-Channel platforms. However, only 35 articles that were much more relatable to the topic were analysed and discussed in detail.

Practical implications – This paper provides insights for managers on optimising logistics processes and strengthening customer relationships by prioritising consumer-valued OMNI-Channel strategies. It also informs small retailers on how to apply OMNI-Channel concepts effectively.

Originality/value – This study fulfils the need for a systematic review of empirical research on OMNI-Channel customer behaviour and intention to use such platforms.

Keywords: Systematic literature review, OMNI-Channel strategy, OMNI-Channel platforms, Intention, Online shopping.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of digital technologies has significantly reshaped the retail landscape, enabling customers to access products seamlessly across multiple platforms. Online shopping allows retailers to operate without physical stores and initially led to the adoption of multichannel strategies. However, changing consumer expectations have accelerated the shift from multichannel to OMNI-Channel retailing, which integrates online and offline touchpoints to provide a seamless shopping experience [13].

Beyond offering multiple ways to transact, OMNI-Channel platforms enable data-driven retailing by capturing customer behaviours across channels. These insights support personalised recommendations, tailored promotions, and unified engagement strategies. Despite their potential, OMNI-Channel platforms remain relatively new, and many customers lack awareness of their benefits and usage.

Empirical research highlights factors such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, trust, security, compatibility, value, and social influence as key determinants of customers' intentions to adopt OMNI-Channel platforms. Recent Malaysian studies further indicate that perceived compatibility, perceived value of

webrooming/showrooming, performance expectations, hedonic motivation, and logistical support shape user intention.

However, despite growing interest, significant knowledge gaps persist. Many consumers conflate multichannel with OMNI-Channel systems. Retailers, particularly small apparel retailers, struggle with system integration, logistics alignment, and consistent cross-channel experiences. Existing research is fragmented and dominated by studies in developed markets, providing limited insights for emerging economies, such as Malaysia.

Problem Statement and Need for This Paper

Current OMNI-Channel research disproportionately focuses on technology adoption and operational strategy while overlooking consumer-centric behavioural dimensions, especially in markets with lower digital maturity [3]. There is limited understanding of how Malaysian consumers form intentions, make channel selections, or develop preferences in OMNI-Channel environments. This underscores the need for a systematic synthesis of existing studies to clarify theoretical inconsistencies, contextual gaps, and practical implications for emerging markets.

Objectives of the Study

This paper aims to: (1) Systematically review empirical studies on OMNI-Channel retailing related to consumer intention, channel selection, and preferences; (2) Identify key determinants influencing online shoppers' intention to use OMNI-Channel platforms; (3) Examine factors affecting consumers' channel selection behaviours; (4) Evaluate drivers of consumer preferences for OMNI-Channel features, including transparency, consistency, and flexibility; and (5) Highlight theoretical, contextual, and methodological gaps for future research, with emphasis on Malaysia's apparel sector.

SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW APPROACHES

The SLR method was adopted due to challenges in locating appropriate references using traditional review methods. The SLR approach encourages rigorous, unbiased, and comprehensive searching through predefined strategies and criteria [21].

Reference Sources for SLR Formation

This study followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses ("PRISMA") statement under the Publication Standard. The PRISMA Statement grants the authority to conduct an accurate search for terms related to the research topic and objectives.

Research Question Formulation

The formulation of the research question was guided by the PICo framework. PICo is a tool designed to assist researchers in developing appropriate research questions for a review by focusing on three key elements: Population (or Problem), Interest, and Context. The PICo framework guided the development of research questions based on Population (online shoppers), Interest (OMNI-Channel intention, selection, preferences), and Context (retail digitalization).

Key research questions include: (1) What factors influence shoppers' intentions to use OMNI-Channel platforms? (2) What drives online shoppers' channel selection? (3) What shapes shopper preferences in OMNI-Channel environments?

Systematic Searching Strategies

Identification

Keywords were developed based on research questions and thesaurus sources. Boolean operators (AND/OR) and wildcard techniques were applied across Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and

Google Scholar. During the process, the researcher identified additional keywords related to online shoppers, such as “*consumer's online shopping experience*, *consumer's shopping behaviour*, and *consumer's online behaviour*.” Furthermore, beyond the terms' intention, selection, and preferences, other related keywords, including “*adoption intention*, *motivation*, *behavioural*, *channel choices*, and *platform selection*”, were also utilised to broaden the search and capture a wider range of relevant studies. In addition, alternative terms for OMNI-channel retailing, such as “*OMNI-channel platforms*, *OMNI-channel*, *retail digitalization*, *online shopping*, and *online platforms*,” were included.

Screening

Filters such as publication year, type, language, and indexing were applied. Duplicate and low-quality articles were removed.

Eligibility

Manual screening of titles, abstracts, and selected findings was conducted to ensure relevance. A final set of 35 high-quality articles was retained through this process.

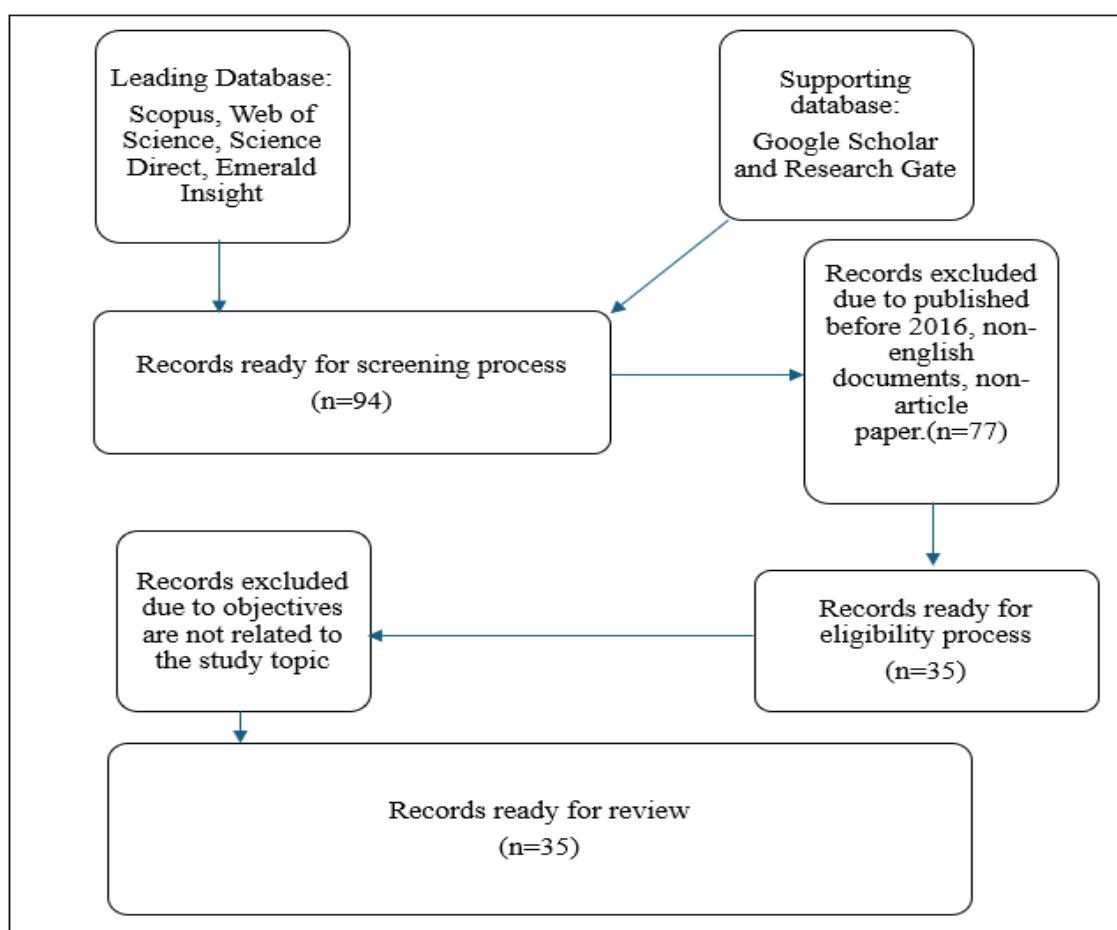


Fig. 1 The process of selecting the articles for the review

CONTENT ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Across the literature, many studies draw on TAM, UTAUT, UTAUT2, DOI, and innovation diffusion theories to explain consumers' OMNI-Channel intentions. Key technological determinants include perceived usefulness, ease of use, performance expectancy, compatibility, and perceived risk ([4], [10], [16], [30], [36]).

Hedonic motivation, habit, and personal innovativeness also consistently emerge as predictors of continued usage, especially in fashion and mobile app contexts ([13], [14]). Several studies find that usefulness has a stronger effect on intention than ease of use, while risk perception remains a critical barrier across settings.

Overall, the findings suggest that consumers engage in OMNI-Channels when the systems offer clear value, low complexity, and alignment with their shopping habits and lifestyles.

A strong theme across the review is the importance of experiential and operational integration. Studies highlight that channel integration—across pricing, promotions, product information, order fulfilment, and customer service—significantly enhances both cognitive and emotional consumer experiences ([5], [6]). Experiential elements such as service consistency, transparency, and flexibility reduce perceived risk, improve flow experiences, and strengthen loyalty ([23], [34].).

Research also indicates that channel transparency and uniformity increase perceived behavioural control and lower risk perceptions, influencing channel selection decisions [38]. These findings show that OMNI-channel success depends not only on technological readiness but also on seamless, predictable, and trustworthy cross-channel experiences.

The reviewed studies show that channel selection is shaped by convenience, cost, delivery preferences, sustainability considerations, and shopping motivations. Consumers favour channels that offer low effort, shorter lead times, and flexible fulfilment options such as BOPS, curbside pickup, and home delivery ([7], [5], [33]). Webrooming and showrooming behaviours remain prevalent in fashion retail, driven by ease of use, usefulness, and exploratory motivations [10].

Incentives such as rebates, in-store app features, and non-monetary rewards can further stimulate channel engagement, especially when aligned with consumer channel preferences [32]. Studies in B2B contexts [25] add that structural assurance and channel experience influence channel preference differently from B2C markets. Overall, channel choices depend on perceived empowerment, assortment, behavioural control, and situational factors such as price sensitivity and risk.

Studies in Malaysia, Turkey, India, and other emerging markets highlight the influence of market maturity, digital literacy, and infrastructural constraints on OMNI-Channel adoption ([14], [15], [27]). These contexts reveal additional behavioural drivers such as trust, privacy concerns, anxiety, and situational factors not commonly examined in developed markets. Retailers in these regions often face challenges related to technological capability, resource availability, and workforce readiness, which shape both consumer expectations and retailer strategies.

Findings suggest that OMNI-channel strategies in emerging markets require gradual implementation, stronger service integration, and enhanced customer transparency and consistency to build trust and engagement.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This SLR consolidates fragmented empirical findings on OMNI-Channel retailing, focusing on intention, channel selection, and customer preferences. While technology-centric frameworks dominate existing research, they overlook contextual and experiential elements that influence OMNI-Channel engagement in emerging markets.

A major limitation in the literature is its concentration in developed economies, leaving gaps regarding how infrastructural weaknesses, inconsistent system integration, and diverse consumer literacy levels influence OMNI-Channel behaviour in countries like Malaysia. As a result, this study underscores the need for context-sensitive frameworks that integrate behavioural and operational dimensions.

For practitioners, especially SMEs, successful OMNI-Channel implementation requires prioritising transparency, consistency, unified pricing, integrated logistics, and customer-friendly return policies. These elements build consumer trust and improve engagement without requiring high-cost technological transformations.

Conclusion

This paper examines OMNI-Channel retailing, focusing on consumer intention, channel selection, and

preferences. Existing studies mainly use technology adoption models like TAM and UTAUT, which explain consumers' readiness but often overlook experiential and contextual factors. Research is concentrated in developed markets, leaving emerging economies such as Malaysia underrepresented, despite unique challenges like infrastructure limits, resource constraints, and varying digital literacy.

The review emphasizes the need for context-sensitive frameworks that combine behavioral and operational factors in OMNI-Channel adoption. Future research should consider market maturity, digital readiness, and retailer capacity to better understand consumer behavior in evolving retail ecosystems.

For practitioners, successful OMNI-Channel implementation requires more than technology. It demands a seamless, transparent, and consistent customer experience across all channels. Small and medium-sized retailers should adopt a phased approach, focusing on achievable strategies such as consistent branding, simplified returns, and cross-channel communication. Policy support, including digital training, e-commerce subsidies, and ethical guidelines, can further enhance adoption and competitiveness.

In conclusion, OMNI-Channel retailing is both a technological and strategic transformation. Consumer intention, channel selection, and preferences are influenced by technological factors (usefulness, ease of use, value) and experiential factors (transparency, consistency, flexibility). The literature remains fragmented and contextually narrow, highlighting the need for studies that explore the interaction of key experiential dimensions on consumer decisions. Aligning digital innovation with customer experience, particularly in emerging markets like Southeast Asia, is essential for fostering loyalty, trust, and long-term engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This SLR shows that OMNI-Channel retailing is not just a technological innovation but a strategic shift in how retailers engage with consumers. Studies indicate that consumer intention, channel selection, and preferences are shaped by both technological factors (e.g., usefulness, ease of use, value) and experiential factors (e.g., transparency, consistency, flexibility). However, most research focuses on technology adoption in developed markets, overlooking operational challenges and consumer behavior in emerging economies.

The review highlights several areas requiring further investigation:

- Supply Chain Management:** A substantial proportion of retailers, approximately 70% adopting the OMNI-Channel strategies continue to face difficulties in integrating and optimising their supply chains ([36], [38], [39]). Future research should examine supply chain coordination, cost efficiency, inventory accuracy, and logistics integration to support seamless multi-channel operations.
- Consumer-Centric Perspectives:** Further studies are needed to understand customer loyalty, engagement, and preference formation within OMNI-Channel environments. Many consumers remain unaware that their interactions span multiple synchronised channels, presenting opportunities to explore how customer education, trust, perceived control, and digital literacy influence long-term engagement and satisfaction.
- Contextual Diversity:** Cultural, economic, and technological differences across regions significantly shape OMNI-Channel adoption. Future research should prioritise empirical studies in emerging markets such as Malaysia to generate context-specific insights. Additionally, comparative and cross-cultural studies can help develop frameworks that are globally informed yet locally relevant, thereby improving the applicability of OMNI-Channel strategies in diverse market environments.

In summary, the future of OMNI-Channel retailing depends on effectively aligning technological capability, consumer experience, and strategic management. Addressing gaps in supply chain integration, customer behaviour, and contextual adaptation can advance both theoretical understanding and managerial practice. A holistic, interdisciplinary research approach will enable retail innovation to keep pace with rapid digital transformation while promoting inclusivity, resilience, and long-term sustainability.

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