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Omnichannel marketing strategy and customer experience management

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Abstract

The fast-paced digitalization of the Indian retail market has transformed how companies shape marketing programs and experiences of customers. This paper discusses the application of omnichannel marketing by the selected Indian retailers in order to improve customer experience management. Based on qualitative multiple case study of Nykaa, Croma, Shoppers Stop and First Cry, the study examines channel integration processes, experiential management processes and relational performance. The results indicate that integrated customer databases, synchronisation and flexibility of inventory fulfilment lead to smooth customer experiences. Loyalty programmes and customised digital interactions promote credibility and repurchase. The research shows that the use of the omnichannel strategy is a customer-focused organisational ability but not a technological innovation. The research will help comprehend the experiential differentiation in the emerging market by mediating theoretical insights based on service-dominant logic, customer experience theory as well as relationship marketing. The findings point to the strategic significance of integrated digital-physical ecosystems to maintain loyalty and competitive advantage in the changing Indian retail setting.

Keywords: Omnichannel marketing, Customer experience management, Retail integration, Loyalty Programmes, Emerging markets, Digital transformation

Introduction

The fast digitalization of the Indian retail and service industries has been able to radically transform the way companies model their marketing and customer experience. As more consumers go online, use smartphones, and organised retail continues to grow, the Indian consumer is engaging with the brand in multiple touchpoints such as websites, mobile applications, physical stores, social media platforms and customer support centres. Such a change has resulted in the appearance of the omnichannel marketing as a strategy need, but not a competitive privilege. Omnichannel marketing can be described as the process of activating several customer contacts to achieve a continuous and integrated brand experience across the channels (Verhoeff, Kannan, and Inman, 2015) [8]. In contrast to the multichannel approaches, which only work across various platforms, omnichannel strategies integrate data, processes, and communication in order to provide continuity in the

customer paths.

This integration is especially significant in the Indian context, where consumers tend to move between offline purchase and on-line research or vice versa based on convenience, trust and category of products. Research has shown that Indian customers are becoming more demanding about having single visibility of inventory, flexible fulfilment, like click-and-collect, and customised suggestions that are consistent across the channels (Piotrowicz, Cuthbertson, 2014) [6]. The digitalization of payment systems and logistics has also led to the ability of the retailers to harmonize physical and digital ecosystems, reinforcing the customer experience management practices. The management of customer experience is aimed at designing and reacting to interactions with customers in order to satisfy or surpass expectations during the entire journey (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) [4]. When implemented successfully in the context of omnichannel, it is a potent

source of satisfaction, loyalty, and profitability in the long term.

Empirical studies indicate that a well-integrated channel will enhance the perceived quality of services and increase the customer engagement (Gao and Su, 2017) [2]. In the emerging markets such as India, where confidence in digital trading has traditionally been built over time, coordinated omnichannel plans also create less uncertainty and enhance brand credibility. Nykaa, Croma, and Shoppers Stop are just a few examples of retailers that have aligned digital platforms, loyalty programmes, and in-store technologies to improve the customer experience. An example of such is that unified loyalty programs and cross-channel offers promote repeat purchases and also allow companies to acquire useful behavioural data to market to. These practices go hand in hand with the strategic view of the omnichannel management as not merely an operational choice, but also a customer-focused philosophy (Verhoff *et al.*, 2015) [10].

Moreover, the competitive forces and price elasticity of the Indian retail market compel companies to differentiate themselves based on excellent customer experience, but not merely on pricing policies. Studies have shown that the level of customer experience plays a major role in the intentions to repurchase and positive word-of-mouth in retail stores (Homburg, Jozic, and Kuehnl, 2017) [3]. Thus, it is academically and practically important to comprehend how Indian companies combine the omnichannel strategies with customer experience management. The paper will review the case studies, which are selected in India in order to analyse the ways in which the integration into the omnichannel improves service consistency, engagement, and loyalty. The study places these practices in the frames of the existing theoretical framework to add to the larger discussion on digital transformation and experiential marketing in the developing economies.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Omnichannel marketing has been developed as a result of past debates on multichannel retailing and integrated marketing communication. Initial studies were aimed at the operational presence of companies in various channels but subsequent studies have directed their attention to the strategic integration of various channels in order to form a single customer experience. According to Verhoff *et al.* (2015) [10], omnichannel retailing refers to the coordinated management of the many channels and customer touchpoints available in a manner that optimises the customer experience across the channels and the performance across the channels. This school of thought emphasizes on integration as opposed to coexistence of channels. This integration is core to maintaining competitiveness in emerging markets like India where consumers move between the digital and physical space regularly.

Omnichannel marketing is theoretically rooted in, in part, service-dominant (S-D) logic. Vargo and Lusch (2004) [7] argue that the value within the products is not embedded but co-created in the interactions between firms and customers. Omnichannel environments can help customers create co-creation by allowing customers to interact with the brand through touchpoints and providing information, feedback, and behavioural data. The co-creation in the Indian context

where digital literacy is growing at a very high rate can be represented in the form of social media interactions, app-based feedback systems and community-based interactions with the brand. S-D logic hence offers an initial frame of reference on the interpretation of omnichannel ecosystems as interactive value networks, as opposed to linear distribution systems.

The omnichannel strategies are further conceptually grounded by the customer experience theory. The conceptualisation of customer experience by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) [4] is that customer experience is a multidimensional construct, including cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and social reactions during the whole customer journey. According to them, companies have to deal with touchpoints before, during, and after purchase. Omnichannel strategies are in direct relation to this journey-based approach since they seek to eliminate disjunctions among touchpoints. Experience consistency is essential in the retail sector of India where customers could do their research online, make their purchases offline, and get after-sales services using mobile applications.

Channel integration theory is also an important source of explanation. Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson (2014) [6] underline that the successful omnichannel retailing depends on the technological infrastructure, the organisational culture, and the supply chain coordination. According to their work, successful integration is not only possible through front-end marketing alignment, but also through backend system synchronisation, such as inventory visibility and data analytics. Empirical data provided by Gao and Su (2017) [2] also prove that the buy-online-and-collect-in-store models have the potential to enhance operational efficiency and customer convenience, which strengthens the perception of service quality.

In addition to the operational efficiency, the omnichannel integration also has the effects on the brand equity and customer loyalty. Homburg *et al.* (2017) [3] suggest that customer experience management (CEM) is a changing strategic concept that combines marketing, service management, and organisational design. Their model is based on the assumption that positive experiences reinforce brand relationships and thereby behavioural consequences, including repeat purchase and advocacy. Experiential differentiation can be a more sustainable competitive advantage in the Indian environment, where pricing strategies alone are not sufficient to compete effectively with the market due to the high intensity of competition and ease of price comparison available on the internet.

The next applicable model is Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which describes the process of adoption of digital platforms by users (Davis, 1989) [1]. Technology adoption behaviour is affected by perceived usefulness, as well as perceived ease of use. Digital interfaces like mobile applications, loyalty dashboard, and payment gateways have to be user-friendly and effective in omnichannel systems to facilitate smooth channel cross-overs. TAM thus supplements the customer experience theory in explaining the influence of interactions with technology on the overall perceptions of the journey.

The relationship marketing theory is also involved in the comprehension of the omnichannel engagement. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994) [5], trust and commitment

constitute major mediators of an effective relational exchanges. Omnichannel strategies in emerging economies, where distrust of online transactions is yet to be established, bring a sense of certainty by ensuring consistency between platforms. The presence of unified branding, promotions,

and open communication will increase relational trust, which will eventually lead to retaining customers. The key theoretical viewpoints in major perspectives of omnichannel marketing and customer experience management have been summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Key Theoretical Frameworks Underpinning Omnichannel Marketing and Customer Experience Management

Theory/Framework	Key Authors	Core Concept	Relevance to Omnichannel Strategy
Service-Dominant Logic	Vargo & Lusch (2004) ^[7]	Value co-creation through interactions	Supports interactive engagement across digital and physical touchpoints
Customer Journey & Experience Theory	Lemon & Verhoef (2016) ^[4]	Multidimensional journey management	Guides integration of pre-, during-, and post-purchase experiences
Omnichannel Integration Theory	Verhoef <i>et al.</i> (2015) ^[8]	Synergistic channel management	Emphasises seamless coordination of channels
Channel Operations & BOPIS Model	Gao & Su (2017) ^[2]	Operational efficiency via integration	Demonstrates performance impact of integrated fulfilment
Customer Experience Management (CEM)	Homburg <i>et al.</i> (2017) ^[3]	Strategic management of experiential touchpoints	Links experience quality with loyalty and performance
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Davis (1989) ^[1]	Perceived usefulness and ease of use	Explains digital adoption within omnichannel ecosystems
Relationship Marketing Theory	Morgan & Hunt (1994) ^[5]	Trust and commitment as relational mediators	Strengthens loyalty through consistent cross-channel engagement

Table 1 indicates that there is no single theoretical tradition upon which the marketing of the omnichannel is based. Rather it appears at the meeting point of service theory, technology adoption, relationship marketing and operations management. All these frameworks explain the reason why integration is a better way to improve customer experience and organisational performance.

Empirically, it has been proven that channel consistency has a strong impact on perceived quality of service and customer satisfaction (Gao and Su, 2017)^[2]. Moreover, the experiential coherence decreases cognitive dissonance between platforms by customers who switch platforms, thus generating trust and perceived reliability (Homburg *et al.*, 2017)^[3]. This observation is especially true in India where consumers often research prices online and then go to physical stores or the other way round.

There is also the significance of data-driven personalisation brought out in the theoretical synthesis. Omnichannel strategies are also dependent on the use of analytics to monitor the customer experience and personalize contacts. Lemon and Verhoef (2016)^[4] argue that the integration of data allows firms to anticipate needs and take control of touchpoint proactively. This is in line with the focus on collaborative value creation of S-D logic. To build this integration, Indian retailers rely more on AI-based recommendation engines, loyalty analytics, and real-time inventory updates.

Overall, the literature indicates that omnichannel marketing is a convergence of technology, service design, and relationship. The mentioned theoretical frameworks offer a multidimensional perspective of the way in which integrated channels can complement customer experience and foster loyalty. In an emerging economy, like India where digital transformation is crossing with the traditional retail format, the omnichannel strategy and customer experience management synergy have significant academic and managerial implications.

Methodology

The qualitative multiple case study approach is used in this study to explore the application of omnichannel marketing

strategies and management of customer experience by Indian retailers through integrated approaches to touchpoints. A case-based method is suitable since omnichannel strategy is situational and entrenched in the organisational process, technological infrastructure, and customer interaction practices (Yin, 2018)^[9]. The Omnichannel transformation is not just a marketing strategy; it entails supply chain coordination, integration of IT and customer interface orientation. Thus, the case study design permits the detailed investigation of these interrelated aspects in the context of real organisations. The analysis of several cases enhances generalisation in the analysis and enables comparison of various retail formats in the Indian market (Verhoeff *et al.*, 2015)^[8].

Case Selection

Purposive sampling was used to select the cases on the basis of three criteria, namely: (1) integrated online and offline platforms, (2) publicly available and verifiable secondary data and (3) strategic relevance in the Indian organised retail industry. According to these criteria, the names of the selected cases are Nykaa, Croma, Shoppers Stop, and FirstCry.

Nykaa is a digitally native brand that has gone physical and retained integrated digital content and loyalty systems. One example of how brick-and-mortar electronics retailing can be integrated with e-commerce and click-and-collect is Croma, which is a subsidiary of the Tata Group. Shoppers Stop offers the understanding of the traditional department store transformation with the help of unified loyalty programmes and inventory visibility. FirstCry can be viewed as an example of category-specialised retail that uses both the large number of offline franchise stores and a powerful online presence. These examples cover beauty, electronics, fashion, and baby products, which allows comparing across sectors and remains relevant to the omnichannel theory.

The sources of secondary data will be annual reports, investor presentations, corporate sustainability disclosures, industry white papers, and peer-reviewed academic literature. The secondary data is appropriate in the research

of the retail strategy due to the fact that omnichannel initiatives are typically reported in the corporate communications and performance reports (Verhoff *et al.*, 2015)^[10]. To guarantee credibility, the triangulation method was used through cross-validating corporate claims on industry analyses and scholarly research. The method improves construct validity in case study research (Yin, 2018)^[9].

Data Analysis

The analysis followed a structured thematic coding process guided by established theoretical frameworks in omnichannel and customer experience research. Three analytical dimensions were identified:

1. **Channel Integration Mechanisms:** Inventory synchronisation, real-time data integration, unified customer profiles, and cross-channel fulfilment models.
2. **Customer Experience Management Practices:** Loyalty programme integration, personalisation, service consistency, and post-purchase engagement.
3. **Performance and Loyalty Outcomes:** Customer retention indicators, engagement metrics, and brand relationship strengthening.

These dimensions were derived from the conceptual

frameworks proposed by Lemon and Verhoef (2016)^[4], who emphasise holistic customer journey management, and Homburg *et al.* (2017)^[3], who conceptualise customer experience management as a strategic organisational capability. The evaluation of fulfilment integration was informed by Gao and Su (2017)^[2], who demonstrate that buy-online-and-pick-up-in-store (BOPIS) enhances both operational efficiency and perceived convenience.

Each case was first analysed independently to identify strategic initiatives and experiential outcomes. For example, Nykaa’s integration of content marketing with loyalty systems was examined under co-creation and engagement theory, while Croma’s click-and-collect operations were assessed through operational integration frameworks. Shoppers Stop’s First Citizen loyalty programme was evaluated as a relational mechanism supporting cross-channel engagement. FirstCry’s franchise-based offline expansion linked with online fulfilment was analysed in terms of service accessibility and trust-building.

Cross-case comparison was then conducted to identify recurring patterns and sector-specific variations. This replication logic allows theoretical refinement by identifying converging evidence across distinct contexts (Yin, 2018)^[9]. The methodological structure is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Methodological Framework and Case Coverage

Component	Description	Application to Selected Cases
Research Design	Multiple qualitative case study	Nykaa, Croma, Shoppers Stop, FirstCry
Sampling Strategy	Purposive selection based on omnichannel maturity	Leading Indian organised retailers
Data Sources	Annual reports, investor presentations, industry and academic literature	Cross-verified corporate disclosures
Analytical Dimensions	Channel integration, customer experience practices, loyalty outcomes	Applied uniformly across all four cases
Evaluation Benchmarks	BOPIS, unified loyalty systems, digital usability	Assessed for each firm’s implementation depth

As presented in Table 2, the methodology combines theoretical advice and systematic case comparison. The study will provide conceptual rigour and contextual relevance because it is based on the well-known omnichannel and customer experience theories and uses the examples of major Indian retailers.

Findings, Analysis and Discussion.

The cross-case study of Nykaa, Croma, Shoppers Stop and FirstCry demonstrate the obvious tendency in the reinforcement of customer experience management in the context of omnichannel marketing strategy in the Indian retail setting. The results are structured in three dimensions of analysis based on the theoretical framework: (1) channel integration mechanisms, (2) customer experience management practices, and (3) performance and relational outcomes.

Channel Integration Mechanisms

In all four cases, we can see the conscious investment in the synchronisation of digital and physical touchpoints. Nykaa combines its mobile application, online store and physical stores and content platforms into an ecosystem that is powered by a centralised customer data. Croma has introduced the use of click and collect, and real time store and online inventory visibility. Shoppers Stop links its offline and online database of first citizen loyalty, and

FirstCry links stores of franchisees with its e-commerce fulfilment system.

Such integration attempts correspond to the omnichannel model suggested by Verhoef *et al.* (2015)^[8], which focuses on synergy over the channel co-existence. The examples show that the level of integration depends on the maturity of the sector, although the presence of inventory synchronisation and the existence of unified customer profiles are typical. According to research conducted by Gao and Su (2017)^[2], buy-online-and-pick-up-in-store (BOPIS) improves the efficiency of operations and subjective convenience. This empirical evidence is supported by the similar fulfilment logic adopted by Croma and FirstCry because customers are able to enjoy flexibility and less uncertainty.

Customer Experience Management Practices

The examples indicate that the integration of the omnichannel goes beyond the alignment of operations to consistency of experience. Nykaa integrates content marketing, influencer and personalised suggestions to generate emotional attachment, which is the focus of service-dominant logic on co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2004)^[7]. The loyalty programme at Shoppers Stop strengthens the relationship bonds throughout the touchpoints, which shows the relationship marketing theory principles (Morgan and Hunt, 1994)^[5].

Lemon and Verhoff (2016) [4] define customer experience as a construct-journey-based concept that covers the pre-purchase and purchase and post-purchase stages. The retailers analysed are proactive in the management of each stage. The pre-purchase interaction is through digital advertising and browsing via apps; the purchase process is through smooth checkout and visibility of inventory; the post-purchase experience is through app notifications, flexibilities of returning the products and continuity of customer service. These stages are integrated, which lowers friction and cognitive dissonance and increases perceived reliability (Homburg *et al.*, 2017) [3].

Performance and Relational Outcomes

The data points to the idea that the adoption of an omnichannel leads to the improvement of engagement and

loyalty results. Loyalty databases are unified, allowing them to be data-driven to enhance repurchase intentions and customer lifetime value. According to Homburg *et al.* (2017) [3], managed customer experience enhances brand relationships and long-term performance. The participation in the loyalty programmes and the digital engagement measures in the analysed cases show the enhancement in the relational continuity.

Moreover, perceived risk in digital transactions is lower when there is consistency in channel experiences, especially in new markets. The commitment-trust theory developed by Morgan and Hunt (1994) [5] describes the role of consistent messaging and reliability of the services in building up trust that subsequently promotes retention. Experience differentiation and not price discounting seems to hold the loyalty in the competitive retailing environment in India.

Table 3: Cross-Case Findings on Omnichannel Strategy and Customer Experience

Analytical Dimension	Nykaa	Croma	Shoppers Stop	First Cry	Theoretical Support
Channel Integration	Unified digital-physical ecosystem; content-linked app	BOPIS; real-time inventory	Integrated loyalty and store visibility	Franchise–ecommerce integration	Verhoef <i>et al.</i> (2015) [8]; Gao & Su (2017) [2]
Experience Management	Personalised recommendations; influencer engagement	Seamless checkout and service continuity	Loyalty-based engagement	Convenience-driven fulfilment	Lemon & Verhoff (2016) [4]; Homburg <i>et al.</i> (2017) [3]
Loyalty Outcomes	Repeat purchases via digital ecosystem	Trust through fulfilment reliability	Strengthened relational bonds	Enhanced accessibility and trust	Morgan & Hunt (1994) [5]

As illustrated in Table 3, omnichannel maturity across cases is always indicative of theoretical propositions of a relationship between integration and experiential value creation. Although there are specific differences in the sector, the common trends are consolidated customer databases, flexibility in fulfilment and personalised communication.

Discussion

The results support the thesis that the omnichannel marketing approach in India is an organisational capability with a customer orientation and not a technological innovation. In line with Verhoff *et al.* (2015) [8], the cases indicate that omnichannel implementation should be coordinated through IT systems, logistics and marketing communication to be successful. Experiential coherence is amplified by the Indian retail environment, which is price-sensitive and digitally growing.

Fulfilment flexibility integration helps the authors of the article by Gao and Su (2017) [2] to empirically conclude that omnichannel operations improve efficiency and customer value perception. In addition, it can be argued that the end-to-end management of experience is increasingly becoming part of the retailer because it aligns with the framework of customer journey proposed by Lemon and Verhoff (2016) [4].

Convergence of service-dominant logic, relationship marketing and technology acceptance theory is theoretically shown by the findings. The digital interfaces need to be easy to adopt (Davis, 1989) [1] and loyalty in the long run is achieved because of trust and consistency of experience (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) [5]. Indian retailers seem to exploit the omnichannel integration as a tool of strengthening the relational commitment in the digitally transforming market.

Comprehensively, the discussion proves that the omnichannel strategy reinforces the customer experience management through the minimization of friction, the improvement of convenience, and the strengthening of trust. In new economies such as India, where digital transformation overlaps with existing retail infrastructure, omnichannel integration is a strategic mediator between operational performance and experience distinction.

Managerial and Theoretical Implications.

The results indicate that the omnichannel marketing strategy must be considered a part of the organisational capacity and not a collection of digital projects. To the managers, companies should focus on the integration of the back-end systems, integrated databases on customers and cross-functional integration to guarantee smooth customer experiences (Verhoff *et al.*, 2015) [10]. Inventory visibility, fulfilment flexibility and personalisation tools should be invested in by the retailers that are operating in the emerging markets like India because these factors directly increase the perceived quality of service and convenience (Gao & Su, 2017) [2].

In principle, the paper supports the overlap of service-dominant logic and customer experience theory by showing how value co-creation takes place at various touchpoints (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Lemon and Verhoff, 2016) [7, 4]. Relational trust is enhanced by the integration of the loyalty systems and brand consistency in the digital retail environment, which relates to the commitment-trust theory (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) [5]. Moreover, usability of the digital interface is a key element of customer adoption and engagement, which is in line with the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) [1]. All these implications point to the fact that omnichannel maturity increases the

experiential differentiation that is especially significant in the competitive and price elastic markets.

Limitations and Future Scope

This research is based on secondary data and qualitative case study, so it is not possible to prove the causal relationships between the omnichannel initiatives and the performance results. Although triangulation enhances validity, primary data like customer surveys or quantitative modelling should be involved in future research to establish experiential impact with more accuracy (Yin, 2018) [9]. Moreover, the chosen cases are the representation of the top organised retailers; small companies and the situation at the rural market are under researched.

Subsequent researches can employ mixed methods to investigate the role of trust as a mediator between channel integration and loyalty results in terms of satisfaction and perceived convenience (Homburg *et al.*, 2017) [3]. Longitudinal analysis would also be able to determine the maturity of omnichannel through the years in any emerging economy. The future studies of AI-based personalisation and data management models would increase the comprehension of technology uptake and ethical issues in an omnichannel ecosystem (Davis, 1989) [1].

Conclusion

The concept of omnichannel marketing has become one of the key forces of customer experience management in the fast-changing Indian retail. Combining both online and offline channels helps the retailers to provide uniform, convenient and personalised customer experiences. The case study of Nykaa, Croma, Shoppers Stop and FirstCry has shown that the implementation of an omnichannel needs to be aligned in the sphere of logistics, technology and marketing communication. In addition to efficiency in operations, integration leads to increased trust, minimized friction and improved relational relationships. Experiential differentiation is a sustainable strategic position in competitive and price-sensitive markets. Indian retailers that do not view omnichannel transformation as a technological upgrade but, instead, as a holistic organisational ability are in a better position to establish loyalty and long-term customer value.

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