Research Article   Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences (QJSS)

Unlocking Consumer Purchase Intentions: The Influence of Omnichannel Retail Strategies and Channel Characteristics

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Abstract: *In this era of digitalization, many retailers create an omnichannel retailing environment through channel integration to cater to customer needs and to meet customer expectations for seamless experiences across multiple retailing channels. In this study, consumer responses are investigated in this modern retailing environment. Consumer empowerment, which influences the intention to purchase, is the focus of this study. The Theory behind this overall model is the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework. Consumer perception Channel Integration, which has four dimensions, positively affects consumer empowerment, resulting in an increase in purchase intention, ultimately improving the company's overall profitability. The data from three main super-stores in Pakistan is collected to test the framework empirically. A significant mediating effect of consumer empowerment has been confirmed by our results and the demonstration of positive responses from customers to channel integration. The moderator, Channel convenience, has a significant role in this framework. This study will also help retailers and researchers improve their channel integration strategy in an omnichannel retailing environment.*

Key Words: Consumer Purchase Intention, Omnichannel Retailing, Consumer Empowerment, Channel Integration, SOR Framework, Consumer Responses, Channel Convenience, Integrated Product and Price, Information Access

Introduction

Background of the Study

In Pakistan, the retailing industry is also growing, and delivery at home with one click is becoming very common after a rapid revolution on the internet. If we talk about retail stores, Metro Carrefour, Chase Value, and Naheed are struggling to compete with one another; according to the latest data on the internet, the Pakistani online retail market will gain $ 2.1 billion $ worth, estimated 5.39 billion $ by 2025, increased by 20.7 %. To fulfill this need, marketers and researchers are working on the concept of omnichannel marketing, though customers In Pakistan, the retailing industry is also growing, and delivery at home with one click is becoming very common after a rapid revolution on the internet. If we talk about retail stores, Metro Carrefour, Chase Value, and Naheed are struggling to compete with one another; according to the latest data on the internet, the Pakistani online retail market will gain $ 2.1 billion $ worth, estimated 5.39 billion $ by 2025, increased by 20.7 %. To fulfill this need, marketers and researchers are working on the concept of omnichannel marketing, though customers should be engaged through integrated online channels for better response. The word "Omni" is a Latin word meaning "All" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015).

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Omnichannel was first described by (Rigby, 2011). Rigby defines omnichannel as "an alignment between online and offline (Physical) channels to provide customers an integrated and seamless experience."

In IDC global Retail insights Research units reports, Parker and Hand (2009) and Zaware and Samudre (2016) wrote "omnichannel evolved from multichannel where consumers use all available channel simultaneously instead of using them parallel. According to Kotler "marketing is the process in which we create value for the customer to capture value from the customers in return that is profit so we can say that by omnichannel marketing We are providing customers more integrated channels to shop easily, conveniently seamlessly.

According to Verhoef et al. (2015), there is a crucial need to provide a seamless experience to customers both physically and online. Husain et al. (2022) wrote, "Order delivery at home is preferred by customers more. Customers seek price information from Mobile phones when visiting stores to shop (Verhoef et al., 2015). Online orders are delivered to customers through delivery at home, and businesses must adopt quick delivery processes (Eckert & Osterrieder, 2020)

Omnichannel business is operating through great endeavors as it requires integration of all touchpoints so needs more effort compared to multichannel and we can say that it is more complex than multichannel (Abrudan et al., 2020). Retailers need to be more attentive when designing an omnichannel approach because it required integration and execution of all channels simultaneously Thus, to attain goals of engagement and coordination of customers in synch all channels must work in alignment and integration so that friction will be less, and seamless experience would generate more sales ultimately the profitability increase (Zhang, 2018; Gao et al., 2021). Thus, we will not only work on how channel integration will affect purchase intention but also fill the gap of previous studies by adding Channel characteristics (Channel convenience) as a moderator in this study. Channel integration means how a retailer provides a seamless purchasing experience through all integrated channels (Lin, Huang, & Cheng, 2023)

Statement of the Problem

Due to emerging digitalization, the retail sector has changed entirely now (Hagberg & Jonsson, 2022) after the COVID-19 pandemic, the retail system in Pakistan is being more digitalized, and omnichannel retailing is becoming more common, especially since superstores like Metro, Carrefour, and Chase up are now possessed different omnichannel software. Every business that exists in this world is to make a profit, and profitability depends upon sales; in the retailing industry, when the customer purchase intention for products increases, the sales ultimately increase. That's why we are conducting this research, In Our study the objective is to provide a clear understanding regarding the role of channel integration on Customer purchasing intention, how and why consumer empowerment acts as a mediator in the consumer purchase decision, and what would be the role of Channel convenience as moderator when a person would be taking a purchase decision because these all variables played important role in customer relationship management.

According to Global Trade Magazine (2021), an agile ecosystem plays an important role in consumer retention by providing the highest value to consumers, and it is only possible through omnichannel marketing. In multichannel marketing, there are different channels that work independently, but in omnichannel, they all become synchronized so that omnichannel is more complex than a typical multichannel system and requires extra effort also (Abrudan et al., 2020).

Purpose of The Study

The purpose of this study is to enhance understanding regarding the importance of omnichannel retailing practices in Pakistan and their impact on consumer purchase intention, which ultimately leads to profitability. New innovative retail channels that are integrated are creating demand for a smooth integrated transaction between channels, Nonetheless, many studies of omnichannel enlightened retailer perspective (Mishra et al., 2021).In Pakistan, there is a huge gap in that there are few researches conducted on Omnichannel marketing, and the concept is flourishing day by day, so there is a need of the hour to study and understand the relationship between omnichannel retailing strategies and consumer buying intention.

The e-commerce and retail sectors in Pakistan are expanding more quickly than typical within minutes, as was already reported. Brands are being approached by consumers via their websites, social media platforms, digital gadgets, physical locations, etc. Brands should prioritize offering a consistent experience across all of their sales channels. Only automation and the Omni channel make this feasible. Retail stores still have a high value for end users and businesses, as evidenced by the reopening of brick-and-mortar stores at the beginning of 2022.

Objectives of the Study

This research has four main objectives.

- To examine the value and importance of omnichannel retailing in Pakistan. And how does Omni-channel retailing play an important role in increasing or decreasing a retailer's profitability?
- To investigate the relationship between The Consumer perception of Channel integration on consumer purchase intention in the presence of a mediator.
- To identify the role of Consumer empowerment on purchase intention.
- To explore the role of channel characteristics and the impact of Channel convenience as moderators in this study.

Research Questions

Q 1: What is the importance of Omnichannel retailing in Pakistan, and how does omnichannel retailing play an important role in increasing or decreasing a retailer's profitability?

Q 2: What is the relationship between "Consumer perception of channel integration" (CPCI) and Customer purchase intention?

Q 3: What is consumer empowerment, and how does it affect a purchase decision?

Q 4: What is the impact of Channel characteristic (Channel convenience) on consumer purchase intention?

Significance of the Study

As We know, in Pakistan, retailing become more advanced after booming cellular smartphones. Retailing has evolved from multichannel to omnichannel, continuously shifting buyer behavior. We can say that omnichannel retailing is the future of Pakistan. Omnichannel development in developing countries is a big challenge, although barriers become drivers that must be improved from the retailer side. So, this big change of dynamics now created a shining opportunity for omnichannel retailing.

This study explains to retailers that if they invest in integrated channels, what would be the best option for better profitability? All channels can be evaluated individually, and ultimately, profitability increases, and retailers would get better off. Having said that, We also want to uncover the mechanism through which channel integration influences customer purchase intention, and customers will get a seamless shopping experience that is very important for a win-win situation that ultimately leads to more profitability.

Literature Review

Omnichannel Retailing

We can explain omnichannel retailing by this statement: In this phenomenon, an organization should look at all channels carefully (Garberson, 2015). Customers feel secure when they get product information from an online channel in a physical store, and they feel comfortable about the availability of that product (Mishra et al., 2021)

Offline Channels

According to reviewed articles, offline retailing is often referred to as "brick and mortar" retailing. We can say that it is the most common type of retailing in which retailers are situated in fixed, permanent locations like a building. Moreover, offline retailing can also include temporary venues such as temporary weekend markets. According to Bell et al. (2013), consumer Perce investigated these components of offline consumer experience for their effects on the future perception of the product and shopping experience.

According to that study, showrooming played an important role in conveying product information to the consumer. This information is very important because it provides a contest between consumer and retail experience with respect to touchpoints. Sometimes, buyers who would resist an online purchase might visit brick-and-mortar stores to test a new product (Bell et al., 2013).

Online Channels

In the online world, consumers attach a set of online practices to their experiences, and their perceived experiences are affected by these practices in online shopping, as well as parallel to a brick-and-mortar store (Lazaris et al., 2015).

Mobile Channels

In modern retailing, mobile channels have revolutionized the whole retailing world. According to Tetteh and Xu (2014), like other online channels, the effects of mobile channels and mobile apps should be investigated by Researchers. Nonetheless, from the literature that is being investigated, mobil,e channel usage is affecting shopping behavior across channels. A Branded App is also considered as an individual channel When we talk about the above-mentioned channels (Verhoef et al., 2015).

Importance of Omnichannel Retailing

There is little literature on channel integration's function to influence customers' overall seamless shopping experiences and purchase intentions. S. Mishra et al. (2021) confirmed that CI affected the customer perception that was present in several research studies. It also confirms multichannel retailing is less integrated than omnichannel retailing; multichannel differs significantly from OM.

Lazaris et al., (2015) postulates that customers in the online world associate a set of online behaviors with their perceptions, and these behaviors impact how customers view their online purchasing and brick-and-mortar store interactions. This study lends credence to the idea that some behaviors matter in both an online and offline setting. Researchers' findings were reaffirmed for both activities, online as well as offline.

The S-O-R paradigm is now being used by academics to describe how customers behave online. The function of external factors like layout design in an e-commerce website has a great influence on customers' emotional state. Chatzoglou et al. (2022) argued that the purchasing decisions of buyers are dependent not only on product and price but also on other features that are of great importance; when selecting a retail outlet, customers compromise between those elements and service.

The omnichannel strategy has a big challenge of bringing together cross-channel touchpoints and offering a personalized consumer experience (Melero et al., 2016). also examine customers' reactions to cross-channel integration in omnichannel retailing. They discovered that uncertainty, identity appeal, and switching costs of multichannel businesses all play a role in mediating the impact of cross-channel integration on customer retention. Omnichannel businesses are permitted by cross-channel integration to raise pricing and market share and decrease consumer behavior associated with home try-ons and business return costs (Gallino & Moreno, 2018).

Nonetheless, some researchers have put forward their findings from the viewpoint of giving people the freedom to do things how they choose (Wathieu et al., 2002). According to several research, consumer empowerment gives customers greater power by opening up additional options for information gathering, granting them more flexibility in their decision-making, or both (Wathieu et al., 2002). When purchasing online, customers have access to additional materials that may be used as decision aids, which gives them greater power (Broniarczyk & Griffin, 2014). Rodrigues et al. (2018) and Speer and Peterson, (2000) shared their opinions on the emotional and cognitive elements of empowerment dialogues. Through the idea of CE, customers have reclaimed control over their interactions with retailers, and OCR has recently shown new advancements because of consumer needs (Goraya et al., 2022). According to reports, empowered customers are more likely to connect favorably with the retailer (Wathieu et al., 2002). Offering CE has become a need for online businesses (Le & Nguyen-Le, 2020). Consumer control and management of their choices is therefore central to the CE in OC strategy (Goraya et al., 2022). When they finish their shopping for their specific needs at the appropriate time and location, consumers can search for, find, and compare information on items, stores, or delivery choices (Zhang et al., 2018; Goraya et al., 2022).

S-O-R framework: (Stimulus-Organism-Response)

This model was first proposed by Mehrabian and Russell in 1974. This model is adopted in many studies to elaborate the association between (S) stimulus that is faced by an organism, (O) organism is the state or

we can say that it is an internal evaluation towards the stimulus acted on, then (R) stand for overall Response either positive or negative (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974)

In other words, the purchase behavior is dependent upon stimuli that impact on consumer's inner psychological states and the consumer's evaluations regarding the product or brand. Stimuli also create purchase motives and ultimately lead to buying decisions by a specific person (Xu & Jackson, 2019)

Consumer Perception Channel Integration

There are myriad findings and insights available in the literature regarding channel integration and purchase intention (Hossain, Akter, Kattiyapornpong, & Dwivedi, 2019), investigating two main types of channel integration (1) providing knowledge about internet shops in physical bricks and mortar stores (offline–online channel integration) (2) providing knowledge regarding physical stores on internet shops (online–off channel integration) So we can say that integration occurs either from a physical or online store.

Many studies of omnichannel retailing enlightened the perspective of the retailer (Mishra et al., 2021). In Pakistan, there is a huge gap that there are few researches conducted on Omnichannel retailing, and the concept is flourishing day by day, so there is a need of the hour to study and understand the relationship between omnichannel retailing strategies and consumer buying intention. Thus, for this reason, the concept of consumer perception channel integration has evolved to gauge consumer purchase intention.

As we know, omnichannel retailing is a combination of integrated processes that provides support in terms of brand or product purchasing, return, or exchange besides channels (in-store, online, mobile, call center, or social media) (Shi et al., 2020). According to the literature available on omnichannel retailing, the realization offered benefits signifies channel integration, including consumer experiences and sales growth (Cao & Li, 2018; Verhoef et al., 2015).

Globally, many customers are using integrated channels retailers for various shopping benefits (Fevad, 2017). In Asia, Alibaba (A popular China-based shopping platform) and Walmart are showing the significance of integrated channels retailing (Zhu, Cohen, & Ray, 2021). Consumers feel satisfaction and applause for integrated channel dynamics and the creation of purchase intention through it; not only this, but they also gain knowledge regarding different products through the usage of integrated channels. is also another property of omnichannel retailing. Consumers browse both online and offline to gain adequate knowledge regarding different product characteristics by using integrated channels (Flavián et al., 2016).

Integrated Promotion

For better understanding and to increase awareness level, a customer must find the retailer's advertisement on another channel as well. Previous literature investigated integrated promotion that somehow channels promote other channels simultaneously (Zhang et al., 2018). According to Pasha et al. (2024), brand trust and brand image mediate the relationship between social network marketing and customer purchase intention, which means that integrated promotion is necessary to increase the awareness level of the customer. Similarly, brand equity also mediates the relationship between the sharing content and purchase intention (Ali et al., 2023), which clearly explains that integrated promotion is important to consider. Further, it was elaborated that if a promotion is the same in all available places, it is called integrated promotion. For instance, emails and other information regarding products are being sent by retailers to clients to demonstrate seamless experience (Lee et al., 2019). However, if a company decides to go online, the same promotion should be available on the offline physical store. Although sales promotions can reach consumers through every channel (Koo, 2020), An increase in consumer satisfaction is the salient feature of integrated promotion because of the joint connection of all channels (Zhang et al., 2018). Moreover, Integrated promotion increases consumer trust by reducing customer complaints and uncertainty (Shen et al., 2018).

Integrated Product and Price

It is meant by all channels representing the same product and price information for a particular product or Brand; consistency matters a lot. Evaluations by the consumer are more consistent in development, and there are fewer chances of confusion as we know that people have been able to easily excess product and

price information due to the growth spurt in mobile devices (Fulgoni, 2014). All channels must provide the same information regarding products and prices in an omnichannel environment (M. Zhang et al., 2018). According to Fulgoni (2014), to increase consumer purchase intention, an omnichannel retailer must provide lower prices through online channels. Moreover, Integrated product and price information provide the benefit of the availability of certain products and assist in gaining the required knowledge of product features and benefits that increase customer satisfaction through a seamless shopping experience (Zhang et al., 2018)

Integrated Information Access

This means that the consumer can switch to another resource easily to get the proper information. It elaborates on how one can access information from other channels as well (Zhang et al., 2018). If a person is searching for a product stock online to find out the availability of that product instead of going brick and mortar, it is an excellent example of an excess of integrated information (Oh et al., 2012). Lee (2020) also endorsed this phenomenon, saying that convenient access to information enhances customer satisfaction during shopping activities, ultimately leading to generating more sales and profitability.

Integrated Order Fulfillment

This means that consumers can give orders, make payments, get deliveries, and return them easily by using one or more channels; in other words, we can say that the whole transaction process can be accomplished easily by one or more channels. In omnichannel retailing, order fulfillment has great importance because it requires more effort to integrate and align the process of supply and demand; in other words, we can say that it provides a connection between the supply chain and sales (Wollenburg et al., 2018). However, clients may feel dissatisfaction and regret if their orders cannot be fulfilled rightly as they want (Lee, 2020).

Lee (2020) suggested that to increase satisfaction among customers, it is necessary that customers should be informed that their transactions occurred at any place; the information could be sent by text message, email, or via any other source. It can increase consumer trust and satisfaction that they purchased the right product they required.

The Impact of Channel Integration on Consumer Empowerment (CE)

Due to consumer empowerment, shopping decisions could be monitored by consumers (Goraya et al., 2022). However, the awareness regarding Channel characteristics and how to use this channel is much needed by the customers (Shen et al., 2018).

Previous studies suggested that omnichannel retailing is flourishing day by day with the introduction of new concepts such as consumer empowerment, which enables the consumer to control their shopping behavior on retailers at the time of shopping decision (Goraya et al., 2020). Wathieu et al. (2002) suggested that more favorable interactions with retailers have been shown by empowered customers. Consumer empowerment has become inevitable now after the introduction of online business (Le & Nguyen-Le, 2020). In omnichannel strategy, the integral role of consumer empowerment is consumer control and evaluation of their choices (Goraya et al., 2020). It is observed that empowered customers possess a higher influence on their shopping decisions amidst the shopping process (Cheah et al., 2022).

Zhang et al. (2018) postulate that in omnichannel retailing, the presence of extra resources allows consumers more control over their decisions and reduces uncertainty. Hence, consumers have become more empowered through omnichannel retailing strategy in each step of the decision-making process at the time of purchase (Goraya et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 1 (CPCI -> CE) (H1): *Consumer perceptions of channel integration have a positive effect on consumer empowerment.*

The Impact of Consumer Empowerment on Purchase Intention

The prior research study suggested that stimuli also create purchase motives and ultimately lead to buying decisions by a specific person (Xu & Jackson, 2019). It mediates the role of channel integration on consumer purchase behavior (Lim et al, 2022). Consumer empowerment acts as a powerful mediator that affects

consumer purchase decisions (Zhang et al., 2018). Gathering information from omnichannel retailers made customers more empowered during their shopping decisions. (Cheah et al., 2022). These three needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness; autonomy refers to someone's quality of self-governance means it is the condition in which a person acts or behaves based on their cognitive needs and acts independently to choose something when the consumer feels autonomous in their decisions in retailing context, they trust on retailer more (Zhang et al., 2018). Consumers' feeling of control is positively influenced by their freedom to make decision. However, customers should be engaged through integrated online channels for better response. So, the hypothesis after this discussion is the following:

Hypothesis 2 (CE -> PI) (H2): *Consumer empowerment has a positive effect on Consumer purchase intention.*

Direct Impact of Consumer Perception Channel Integration on Purchase Intention

As in this study, a mediator is used to detect the role of consumer perception channel integration on purchase intention so as to find out partial or full mediation and analyze the direct effect of CPCI on purchase intention in the presence of a mediator. In previous studies, there have been some reported direct effects of CPCI on PI, so it is assumed that CPCI positively influences purchase intention.

Hypothesis 3 (CPCI -> PI) (H3): *Consumer empowerment positively influences Consumer purchase intention in the presence of a mediator.*

Channel Characteristics

In this study, we also gauge the impact of channel characteristics as moderator; previous studies suggested that the shopping environment has a visible impact on consumer behavior (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). In omnichannel retailing, customers are dependent on both online and offline places and use both in sync in the shopping journey (Hure et al., 2017).

Impact of Channel Convenience as Moderator

This means that the time and effort that a customer spends on shopping will be minimized (Gao et al., 2021). In other words, we can say that the speedy shopping process in which there is less time and effort consumed to shop for anything is called channel convenience. In omnichannel retailing, channel convenience has great importance as it reduces shopping costs and ultimately provides excellent support to organizations (Xu & Jackson, 2019). However, the customer can easily achieve their desired objectives in the presence of an omnichannel retailing environment where channel convenience is on a higher level. However, it provides ease of use to omnichannel services and, ultimately, more freedom perceived by customers (Xu & Jackson, 2019). So, we propose the following hypothesis statement.

Hypothesis 4 (Moderating effect of Channel convenience) (H4): *A high level of Channel convenience has a positive impact on the relationship between Consumer empowerment and purchase intention.*

Research Framework by (PLS)
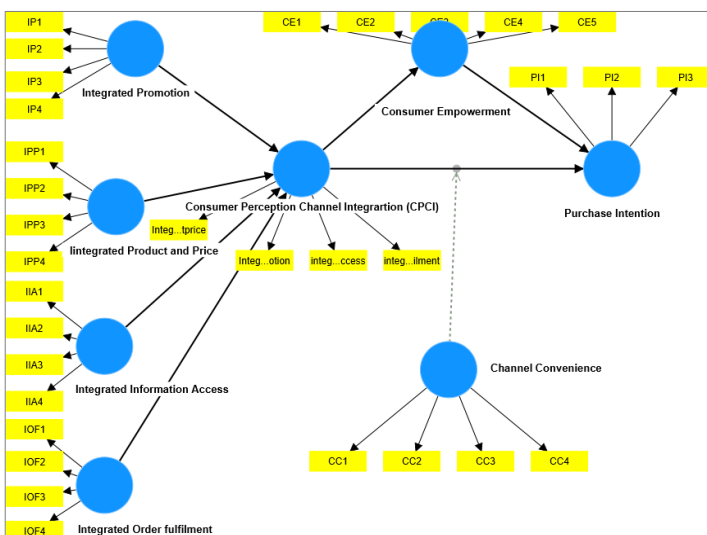
Research Design

The design of the study is described as the type of research the study prefers to carry out. Research design provides a way to collect and evaluate data in research. The scholars have offered several techniques for the design of the study. Descriptive research design, correlative design of the study, experimental research design, evaluation, and meta-analysis are some of the popular research designs (Creswell et al., 2003). This study follows a descriptive research design as it aims to describe the phenomenon accurately. Thus, the design is a roadmap for a research proposal that guides the whole research process to ensure the solution to the concerned research problem (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2022)

Target Population

To test our proposed Research Model, we will collect data from retail customers using more than one sales channel for shopping from superstores. The superstore's names are Chase Up, Carrefour, and Metro Cash and Carry. These three superstores' customers are considered the target population for this study.

Sample Design and Data Collection Procedure

To collect appropriate data, we first plan a suitable sample size. Hair et al. (2014) reaffirmed that for significant results, the sample size should be between (200-400) subjects. Therefore, our study employed 228 respondents. The survey questionnaire will be distributed through Google Forms. Online survey tools provide a credible platform for validating conceptual models (Mallette & Barone, 2013). At last, the current research model was empirically tested in the context of omnichannel retail.

Reliability and Validity

In the research paper, the implemented partial least square (PLS) method by Smart PLS 4.0 was used for testing our research model. Smart PLS is used in this study for several reasons: a component-based approach is used in PLS analysis (Lohmoller, 1988), and both formative and reflective constructs can be handled by smart PLS (Gefen et al., 2000). In this study, all variables are measured as reflective constructs except consumer perception channel integration, which is a formative construct. However, a large sample size is not required for PLS and has less restriction in measurement scales (Chin et al., 2003)

First, we analyze the reliability of our instrument. Internal consistency is measured by Cronbach alpha, as table 1 shows all variables Cronbach Alpha are higher than 0.7, which is recommended acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994); as far as all composite reliabilities also exceeded 0.7, that suggests our construct has adequate internal consistency. Furthermore, all reflected constructs have higher values than 0.50 for Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

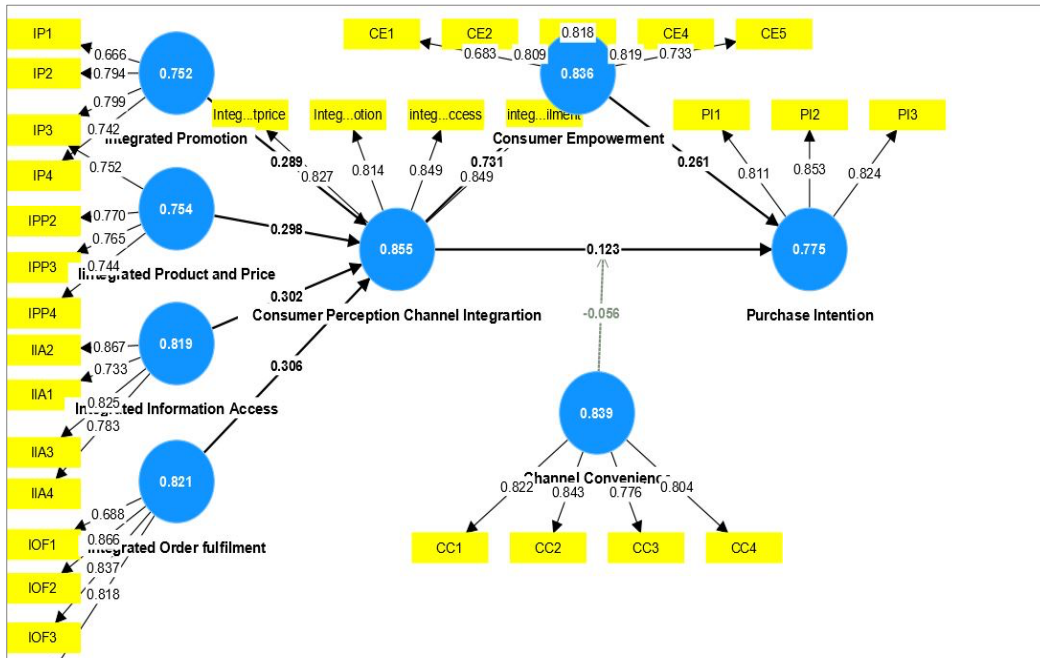### Table 1

Construct Reliability and Validity (n=228)

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Channel Convenience	0.829	0.839	0.659
Consumer Empowerment	0.832	0.836	0.6
Consumer Perception Channel Integration (CPCI)	0.855	0.856	0.697
Integrated Product and Price	0.753	0.754	0.574
Integrated Information Access	0.815	0.819	0.646
Integrated Order fulfillment	0.816	0.821	0.648
Integrated Promotion	0.743	0.752	0.566
Purchase Intention	0.773	0.775	0.688

Figure 2
Outer Loadings

Discriminant Validity

We also calculate discriminant validity by HTMT Method through smart PLS, HTMT value close to 1 indicates there is some discriminant validity. In our data analysis, Table 2 shows that almost all constructs have less than 1 value for HTMT, so we can say that discriminant validity for our model is satisfactory.

Table 2
Discriminant Validity (n=228)

	Channel Convenience	Consumer Empowerment	Consumer Perception Channel Integration (CPCI)	Purchase Intention
Channel Convenience				
Consumer Empowerment	0.775			
Consumer Perception Channel Integration (CPCI)	0.717	0.866		
Integrated Product and Price	0.654	0.769	1.033	
Integrated Information Access	0.602	0.693	1.016	
Integrated Order fulfillment	0.598	0.8	1.015	
Integrated Promotion	0.654	0.76	1.025	
Purchase Intention	0.834	0.8	0.723	

Hypothesis Testing

The reliability and validity of the model show that the mode has internal consistency and validity; after that, the next step is to analyze the path coefficient; in table 4.9, all path analyses are present that are collected by the bootstrapping technique in PLS smart 4.0. The path between consumer perception channel integration (CPCI) and consumer empowerment (CE) is significant p = <0.001, supported by H1, which means CPCI has a positive relationship with CE. Moreover, it represents that more self-control empowers the customer to make shopping decisions easily in omnichannel retailing. On the other hand, the path from consumer empowerment to purchase intention (PI) H2 is also significant p = <0.001, which means CE also possesses a positive relationship with PI. This means that if the consumer is more empowered, the

purchase intention will also increase. Now, the next hypothesis to be tested is H3, which is a direct relationship between CPCI and PI; table 4.8 depicts the relationship between CPCI and PI in the presence of CE as insignificant p = 0.08, which means if CE is presented as a mediator, all effect is transferred through CE so that H3 hypothesis is rejected. This means that if the consumer is not empowered, they cannot make the decision to purchase anything. R^2 values for consumer perception channel integration, consumer empowerment, and purchase intention are 0.95, 0.53, and 0.54, respectively. That indicates a strong relationship between variables. The next hypothesis to be tested is H4, which is the moderating effect of channel convenience on the linkage between CPCI and PI. The effect is insignificant p = 0.15; the results reveal that in this study, the channel convenience act as moderator has no effect.

Table 3
Path Coefficient Analysis (n=228)

Linkage between variables (Direct Effect)	Path Coefficient	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	T statistics	P values
Consumer Empowerment->Purchase Intention	0.26	0.26	0.09	2.85	0.00
Consumer Perception Channel Integration -> Consumer Empowerment	0.73	0.73	0.04	19.05	0.00
Consumer Perception Channel Integration -> Purchase Intention	0.314	0.12	0.07	1.75	0.00

Table 4
Hypothesis Testing (n=228)

Linkage between variables (Direct Effect)	Impact
Consumer Empowerment -> Purchase Intention	
Consumer Perception Channel Integration -> Consumer Empowerment	Supported
Consumer Perception Channel Integration -> Purchase Intention	Supported
Channel Convenience x Consumer Perception Channel Integration -> Purchase Intention	Not Supported

Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of consumer empowerment (CE) on the linkage between consumer perception channel integration (CPCI) and purchase intention (PI). The results are as depicted by Table 4.11, the total effect of CPCI on PI was significant (β = 0.314, t =4.75, p =<0.001) with the inclusion of mediating variable CE, the impact of CPCI on PI became insignificant, (β =0.123, t =1.747, p = 0.081). The indirect effect of CPCI on PI through CE was found to be significant (β = 0.190, t = 2.790, p =0.005). This shows that the relationship between CPCI and PI is fully mediated by CE. This proves that in this model, consumer empowerment acts as a powerful mediator.

Table 5
Mediation Analysis (n=228)

Total Effect (CPCI -> PI)		Direct Effect (CPCI -> PI)			Indirect effect of CPCI on PI				
Coefficient	P-value	Coefficient	P-value	CPCI-> CE-> PI	Coefficient	SD	T-value	P-value	BI (2.5%; 97.5%)
0.314	0.00	0.123	0.081		0.19	0.068	2.79	0.005	.191–.153

Moderation Analysis

Results revealed that channel convenience (CC) have no moderation effect on the relationship between consumer perception channel integration (CPCI) and purchase intention (PI). So, the hypothesis is also rejected (β = –0.06, t = 1.45, p = 0.15). Figure 4.1 reveals there is no impact of the moderator on both higher and lower levels of PI. Hence, it proves that channel convenience in Pakistan has no effect on purchase of customers.

Table 6

Moderation Analysis (n=228)

Linkage between variables (Moderation Effect)	Path Coefficient	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	T statistics	P values
Channel Convenience x Consumer Perception Channel Integration -> Purchase Intention	–0.06	0.06	0.04	1.45	0.15

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study results reveal that consumer perception channel integration has a positive effect on consumer empowerment, and consumer empowerment positively influences purchase intention, which means the more empowered customer easily makes purchase decisions. The SOR framework is a great tool for gauging customer opinions and their intentions to buy a specific product. In omnichannel retailing, the retailing environment is fully integrated; in the presence of a mediator, the consumer perception channel integration increases the purchase intention of customers. Consumer empowerment acts as a powerful mediator.

So, the current study proves that in the retailing and e-commerce field, channel integration plays a major role in increasing consumer purchase intention because it provides a clear understanding regarding consumer perceptions and responses towards omnichannel retailing strategies, omnichannel retailing would make a retailer more impactful more trustworthy to the consumers and the consumer will attract more towards the omnichannel retailer in order to purchase goods and services. The results prove that consumer empowerment acts as a strong mediator that explains how an omnichannel retailer can gain better relationships with customers, which leads to increased profitability and increased purchase intention.

This study explains to retailers that if they invest in integrated channels, what would be the best option for better profitability? All channels can be evaluated individually, and ultimately, profitability increases, and retailers would get better off. However, results prove the mechanism through which channel integration influences customer purchase intention, and customers will get a seamless shopping experience, which is very important for a win-win situation that ultimately leads to more profitability. The results show that there is no significant effect of channel convenience that is tested as a moderator in this study. In the context of Pakistan, the results confirm that the omnichannel retailers that are present in our study, Imtiaz, Chase Up, and Metro Cash and Carry, if they invest in channel integration, get back a better payoff not only in the form of profitability but also brand image building in the minds of consumers, as the results confirm the more empowered customer have the probability to shop more.

Theoretical Implications

This study has also confirmed some theoretical implications. Retailers could gain new insights into an omnichannel retailing environment by getting consumer responses on different variables. Consumer responses for a firm have unique importance as they can provide insights to make a difference in an organization and also to make a competitive advantage on other products or organizations. It is also used as a yardstick to gauge an organization's strategic planning. However, a lot of retailers have implemented omnichannel retailing strategies to fulfill their customer's needs and demands. The SOR framework, used in different retailing studies to elaborate stimulus, organism, and response for a model, displayed the numerical evidence of the positive relationship between channel integration and consumer empowerment.

Verhoef et al. (2015) confirmed that in previous literature, consumer behavior is affected by channel attributes. Moreover, this research not only displayed the role of channel integration in evaluating positive responses from customers but also increased the purchase intentions of customers.

On the other hand, this study used consumer empowerment as a strong mediator to explain the role of channel integration in eliciting consumer responses. Self-determination theory explained that empowerment effect the behavior and human judgment. Not only that, but improved purchase intention and customer satisfaction are also a result of consumer empowerment.

Practical Implications

This study also provides insights for practitioners; for instance, managers can gain an understanding of omnichannel concepts in business. Retailers can take advantage of increased patronage intention by providing self-empowerment to customers. Students could understand the concept of omnichannel retailing, which could alter the buying behavior for specific brands. Most retailers use omnichannel retailing systems, but a few manage their channels separately (Oh et al., 2012).

As discussed earlier, retailers can get better payoffs by providing seamless experiences to customers. Customers become happy to be empowered in the sense they can make their own decisions; there is no force in this regard to shop or buy things from a superstore. In the context of Pakistan, retailers like Imtiaz, Chase Up, and Metro can increase their sales by providing channel integration to customers and delegating more decision-making authority to consumers to achieve their targets. All three stores in Pakistan are using omnichannel and providing customers seamless retailing experience.

Limitations and Future Research

This study mainly focuses on consumer perception channel integration that affects consumer empowerment, but generally, there are more factors that can influence the whole omnichannel scenario. Thus, more data would be required to evaluate other factors affecting the overall shopping process. Another aspect is that we have got data from customers of just Three superstores, Metro, Imtiaz, and Chase up so that data is gathered through almost the same population; for clear data and detailed customer insight, data should also be gathered from a high-profile retailer like Hyperstar. Thus, the generalizability of the study is limited. Moreover, the generalizability of this research may be influenced by cultural differences. The findings of several studies indicate that consumer behavior is always culture-related. For example, the West has more uncertainty avoidance behavior than Asians (Ye et al., 2021). Ultimately, findings and insights suggest that future studies should focus on the relationship between channel integration and purchase intention and should evaluate consumer responses to channel integration.

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