

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (IJEMP)

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DEVELOPMENT OF OMNI-CHANNEL AT CHINA

Haidong Zhang¹, Zailani Abdullah^{2*}

- Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Business, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Malaysia
- Email: a20e002f@siswa.umk.edu.my
- ² Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Business, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Malaysia
- Email: zailania@umk.edu.my
 Corresponding Author

Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 18.04.2024 Revised date: 13.05.2024 Accepted date: 20.06.2024 Published date: 30.06.2024

To cite this document:

Zhang, H., & Abdullah, Z. (2024). Development of Omni-Channel at China. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Management Practices*, 7 (25), 521-531.

DOI: 10.35631/IJEMP.725039

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Abstract:

Consumer behaviors, market development, and relationships between businesses and consumers are all being strongly impacted by ongoing digitization and technology advancements. By offering a variety of integrated channels, retailing companies are attempting to promote these advances. The omnichannel retail approach has revolutionized retail by consolidating all customer touchpoints into a single, holistic experience. However, globally, especially in China, comprehensive scrutiny of omnichannel marketing remains limited. As a result, we present in this study a comprehensive assessment of omni-channel marketing and company success, with an emphasis on retailing in China. The developed review methodology and proposed novel classifications and categorisations can be used by researchers and practitioners alike for a structured analysis and applications of omnichannel in retailing at China.

Keywords:

Omnichannel, Marketing, Retailing, Systematic Review, China

Introduction

The retail market in China is projected to increase by \$1.19b from 2024 to 2028 with Compound Annual Growth Rate of 8.09%, according to Technavio. It will be driven by ecommerce and omni-channel strategies. The growth will be fueled by the premiumisation of products and the widespread adoption of online and omni-channel retailing methods. In the rapidly evolving landscape of retail and consumer behavior, the concept of omni-channel has emerged as a transformative strategy for businesses aiming to integrate their various sales and

marketing channels into a seamless, interconnected experience. Originally driven by technological advancements and shifting consumer expectations, omni-channel strategies have redefined how businesses engage with their customers, aiming to provide a unified experience across physical stores, online platforms, mobile apps, and social media channels. This introduction explores the evolution and impact of omni-channel strategies, highlighting key trends, challenges, and opportunities in its development.

The evolution of omni-channel reflects a departure from traditional multi-channel approaches, which often segmented customer interactions into distinct channels with limited interaction between them. As Huang and Benyoucef (2015) suggest, omni-channel retailing emphasizes integration and coherence, enabling customers to navigate between channels effortlessly while experiencing consistent brand messaging, product availability, and service excellence.

This transformation is not merely about technological integration but also necessitates organizational agility and strategic alignment across departments. Verhoef et al. (2015) highlight the importance of breaking down internal silos to facilitate real-time data sharing, personalized marketing campaigns, and responsive customer service. Such integration empowers businesses to anticipate customer needs, enhance operational efficiency, and foster loyalty through personalized, context-aware interactions.

From a consumer perspective, the rise of omni-channel has redefined shopping expectations, empowering individuals with unprecedented convenience, choice, and control over their purchasing journey (Roggeveen et al., 2015). Today's consumers expect a seamless transition between online research, in-store visits, and mobile transactions, demanding a consistent brand experience and instant gratification. This shift underscores the imperative for businesses to adopt agile, customer-centric strategies that prioritize ease of access, personalized recommendations, and reliable fulfilment across all channels.

Despite its transformative potential, the journey towards effective omni-channel integration poses significant challenges. Issues such as data security, technological complexity, and cultural resistance within organizations can hinder progress (Verhoef et al., 2016). Overcoming these obstacles requires strategic investment in robust infrastructure, data analytics capabilities, and continuous adaptation to emerging technologies and consumer behaviors. This gap in literature motivated us to conduct this systematic and comprehensive literature review. In the next section, we will elaborate on our motivation for this study in detail.

Literature Review

Definition of Omni-Channel

The concept of omni-channel has evolved significantly over the years, reflecting changes in consumer behavior, technological advancements, and strategic business practices. This review synthesizes key perspectives on the definition of omni-channel, emphasizing its evolution and implications for modern businesses.

Initially, omni-channel emerged as a response to the fragmentation of consumer touchpoints across digital and physical platforms. Huang and Benyoucef (2015) define omni-channel as a strategic approach that integrates all available channels to provide a seamless customer experience. This integration goes beyond traditional multi-channel strategies by ensuring consistency in branding, product information, pricing, and customer service across channels.

Verhoef et al. (2015) expand on this definition by emphasizing the importance of real-time data integration and personalized customer interactions in omni-channel strategies. They argue that successful omni-channel implementation requires leveraging data analytics to deliver tailored experiences that anticipate and fulfil individual customer needs across all touchpoints. This personalized approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also drives engagement and loyalty by delivering relevant, timely interactions.

The evolution of omni-channel has also been influenced by the rise of mobile commerce and digital platforms. Roggeveen et al. (2015) highlight the role of mobile devices in facilitating seamless omni-channel experiences, enabling consumers to research products, make purchases, and engage with brands across multiple devices and locations. This mobile-centric view underscores the need for omni-channel strategies to be adaptable and responsive to changing consumer behaviors and technological advancements.

Beyond retail, omni-channel principles have been applied across various industries including healthcare, hospitality, and financial services. In these sectors, omni-channel is seen as a means to enhance service delivery, improve customer engagement, and optimize operational efficiency (Roggeveen et al., 2015). By integrating multiple channels of communication and service delivery, organizations can streamline processes, reduce costs, and deliver a consistent brand experience that meets customer expectations.

Despite its transformative potential, implementing omni-channel strategies remains a challenge for many organizations. Verhoef et al. (2016) identify common obstacles such as organizational silos, data integration issues, and cultural resistance to change. Overcoming these challenges requires a holistic approach that aligns technology investments with organizational capabilities and customer-centric values to deliver seamless, personalized experiences across all customer touchpoints.

Omni-Channel for Retail Performance

Omni-channel marketing has become pivotal in modern retail strategy, enabling businesses to swiftly gather external information, adapt organizational structures, and enhance competitiveness and market position (Saghiri, 2018). Millar (2015) supports this view, highlighting how omni-channel strategies improve information accuracy and supply chain performance by reducing demand volatility.

Recent studies (Jocevski et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2018; Sandberg et al., 2022) underscore omni-channel marketing's role in leveraging material, intangible, and human resources such as marketing integration, technological capability, and organizational learning. The synergy between omni-channel strategies and firm capabilities significantly influences business performance (Song et al., 2019), emphasizing the importance of dynamic capabilities, strategic alignment, and IT infrastructure.

Empirical research highlights mediation effects where omni-channel marketing enhances information benefits, quality, and innovation across technological and sustainable domains (Verhoef et al., 2015; Akter et al., 2019; Lazaris & Vrechopoulos, 2014; Parker-Strak et al., 2023; Bijmolt et al., 2021). Studies also explore how omni-channel strategies impact financial performance through business model innovation and supplier development (Shcherbakov & Silkina, 2021; Do Vale et al., 2021; Sousa et al., 2021).

The literature categorizes research into omni-channel, cross-channel marketing, and omni-channel sales, each exploring how various analytics approaches—prescriptive, descriptive, and predictive—drive business outcomes (Hosseini et al., 2017; Chiu & Chuang, 2021). Despite their independent development, these subsets converge on the theme of leveraging channels to enhance business agility and performance.

Digital technologies and omni-channel platforms, including AI/ML, are pivotal in reshaping retail enterprises, enhancing their ability to adapt to competitive environments and innovate business models (Li et al., 2019). Retail enterprises benefit from integrating diverse resources to meet evolving consumer demands, thereby fostering network effects and knowledge sharing (Wang, 2021).

In conclusion, the synthesis of these findings highlights omni-channel marketing's profound impact on enterprise performance through enhanced resource utilization, strategic alignment, and innovative adaptation to digitalization.

Omni-Channel for Retail Industry at China

Omni-channel retailing has gained significant traction in China's dynamic consumer market, driven by rapid digitalization and evolving consumer preferences. This review synthesizes key perspectives on omni-channel strategies within the Chinese retail industry, highlighting definitions, strategic implementations, and their implications.

Omni-channel in the Chinese retail context is defined as a strategic approach that integrates online and offline channels to provide a seamless and personalized customer experience (Chen et al., 2018). Initially, omni-channel strategies focused on integrating e-commerce platforms with physical store networks to enhance customer convenience and engagement (Liu & Wei, 2019). This integration aims to provide customers with consistent brand experiences, whether they shop online, in-store, or through mobile devices.

The evolution of omni-channel in China's retail sector has been shaped by advancements in mobile technology and social commerce platforms. Xu et al. (2020) highlight the role of mobile devices and social media in driving omni-channel experiences, allowing consumers to research products, make purchases, and share their experiences seamlessly across multiple digital touchpoints. This mobile-centric approach has transformed consumer behavior, emphasizing the need for retailers to adopt agile omni-channel strategies that cater to mobile-savvy consumers.

Furthermore, omni-channel strategies in China emphasize the integration of online-to-offline (O2O) capabilities, where digital platforms are used to drive foot traffic to physical stores and vice versa (Huang & Benyoucef, 2015). This O2O integration not only enhances customer engagement but also optimizes operational efficiencies by leveraging data analytics to personalize marketing efforts and inventory management.

In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of omni-channel strategies in China, with retailers enhancing their digital capabilities to meet the surge in online shopping demand (Xu et al., 2021). This digital transformation underscores the strategic imperative for retailers to invest in robust e-commerce platforms, logistics infrastructure, and customer service capabilities to maintain competitiveness in a rapidly evolving market environment.

Despite its transformative potential, implementing omni-channel strategies in China's retail industry presents challenges such as data privacy concerns, logistical complexities, and regulatory compliance (Chen et al., 2018). Overcoming these challenges requires retailers to develop comprehensive strategies that balance technological innovation with regulatory adherence and consumer trust.

In summary, omni-channel strategies in the Chinese retail industry represent a strategic evolution towards integrating online and offline channels to deliver seamless, personalized customer experiences. This evolution is driven by advancements in mobile technology, social commerce, and digital transformation, underscoring the importance of agility and innovation in capturing consumer demand and driving sustainable growth.

Table 1: Previous Studies of REs Related to Omni Channel at China

Table 1: Previous Studies of REs Related to Omni Channel at China				
Year	Authors	Context of studies	Business	
			Improvement	
2024	Liu, Y., & Song, G.	Factors Affecting Supply Chain	Supply Chain	
		Integration in Omni-Channel Retailing.		
2024	Liu, T., & Liu, M.	Does cross-channel consistency always	Marketing	
		create brand loyalty in omni-channel		
		retailing?		
2024	Li, J., & Liu, X.	An agent-based simulation model for	Operation	
		analyzing and optimizing omni-channel		
		retailing operation decisions.		
2024	Gao, M., & Huang,	The mediating role of perceived enjoyment	Shopping	
	L.	and attitude consistency in omni-channel	Intention	
		retailing.		
2024	Zhang, B., Chen, Z.,	Research on the application of supply chain	Supply Chain	
	Chen, Z., & Peng, Y.	revenue sharing contracts under omni-		
		channel retail BOPS mode.		
2024	Liu, S., Wang, J.,	Data-driven dynamic pricing and inventory	Dynamic	
	Wang, R., Zhang, Y.,	management of an omni-channel retailer in	Pricing and	
	Song, Y., & Xing, L.	an uncertain demand environment.	Inventory	
			Management	
2023	Li, Y., Li, B., Wang,	Optimal sales strategies for an omni-	Marketing	
	M., & Liu, Y.	channel manufacturer in livestreaming		
		demonstration trends.		
2023	Xu, J., & Cui, X.	Research on the Game Relationship and	Relationship	
		Behavior Optimization between Banks and	Optimization	
		Customers in the Omni-Channel		
		Environment.		

Research Methodology

The objective of this literature review is to provide an overview of current research on omnichannel. The literature search was conducted in July 2024 using an abstract and citation database. Various search criteria were employed to retrieve relevant articles. Firstly, following Mariani et al. (2020), multiple search queries combining keywords like "omnichannel," "multichannel," and relevant terms such as "retail*" and "sales*" were utilized in the text, abstract, and keywords of academic publications. Secondly, only articles and those in press Copyright © GLOBAL ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (M) SDN BHD - All rights reserved

were considered, while conference papers and book chapters were excluded. Thirdly, the documents had to be in English. Lastly, the search covered data collected between 2014 and June 2024, encompassing all relevant studies indexed during this period. After removing duplicates and articles not directly pertinent to the analysis, a final dataset of 46,553 papers from Web of Science, specifically 512 in retailing, was identified. These papers encompass all omni-channel studies published and indexed from 2014 to 2024. Following abstract screening, 144 potentially relevant articles remained, with 122 ultimately included after full-text quality assessment. This comprehensive review synthesized the findings to present the state of omnichannel research.

Results and Findings

The research keywords form the basis of the systematic literature review procedure. According to the inclusion-exclusion criteria, 122 articles were chosen with regard to each set of research keywords. The three stages of the articles' screening are displayed in Table 2. The proposed research piece was divided into three sections based on the content that was extracted from these articles: a thorough overview of omni-channel marketing in retailing domain, marketing and performance in retailing.

Table 2: The article with screening phase.

Search items	Based on below search string		Result
	Omnichannel,	Omnichannel,	_
	Multichannel	Multichannel,	
		Retail*, Sales*	
Journals	46553	512	47065
First screening based	34198	160	34342
on keywords, abstract,			
title and Journals			
Second screening based	16590	144	16734
on year (2014–2024)			
Journals			
Final abstracts		122	122
screening			

Source: Web of Science Core Collection.

With the rapid growth of data, omni-channel analytics has given researchers an exposure to utilize it in more noticeable manner for decision-making in several retailing applications. The trend of omni-channel analytics in the field of retailing domain for the year 2014–2024 is described in Figure 1 with respect to Tables 2 of the revised version of the article. Figure 1 shows the increasing tendency of doing innovative research studies (published in reputed journals) in the area of retailing omni-channel. The surge in omni-channel retailing in 2022 and 2023 can be attributed to several factors. The key is the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed consumer behavior, pushing more shoppers online. As physical stores reopened, consumers expected the convenience of online shopping along with the tactile experience of in-store visits, driving the need for integrated omni-channel strategies.

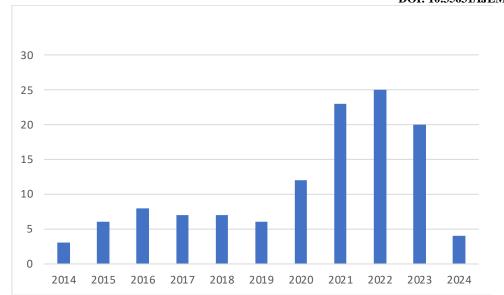


Figure 1: Trend Of Retailing Omnichannel Research From 2014 To 2024.

Discussions

The concept of Omni-Channel began gaining attention in China around 2014, with a modest number of publications exploring its potential and implications. During this period, there was a growing recognition of the need for integrated retail strategies that unify online and offline channels. Key discussions focused on early adopters, technological challenges, and consumer behavior shifts towards digital platforms.

From 2017 onwards, the pace of Omni-Channel development accelerated in China. Publications increased, indicating a broader acceptance and implementation of Omni-Channel strategies by retail giants and smaller enterprises alike. This period saw discussions on technological advancements such as AI and big data analytics driving personalized customer experiences. Companies began integrating their online and offline operations more seamlessly, leveraging mobile platforms and social media for customer engagement.

The years 2020 to 2022 marked a phase of maturation and innovation in China's Omni-Channel landscape. With a significant rise in publication numbers, there was a focus on refined strategies, omni-channel logistics optimization, and the role of blockchain in supply chain transparency. Chinese retailers increasingly utilized livestreaming and virtual reality to enhance online shopping experiences. Discussions also emphasized the importance of real-time data analytics in predicting consumer trends and optimizing inventory management.

As of 2023 and 2024, the discourse on Omni-Channel in China reflects ongoing advancements and challenges. There's a notable trend towards sustainability and eco-friendly practices within Omni-Channel operations. Discussions now include the impact of global events (such as the pandemic) on consumer behavior and supply chain resilience. Future directions point towards further integration of AI and machine learning to personalize customer interactions, and the continued evolution of mobile commerce as a dominant channel.

Conclusion

The development of Omni-Channel in China has evolved significantly over the past decade, driven by technological innovation, changing consumer expectations, and competitive

pressures. The trajectory from early experimentation to widespread adoption underscores China's role as a global leader in digital retail transformation. Looking ahead, continued research and adaptation will be crucial as Omni-Channel strategies evolve to meet new challenges and opportunities in the dynamic Chinese market.

This study makes a significant contribution by advancing theoretical knowledge, providing practical guidance for retailers, informing policy and regulatory frameworks, fostering technological innovation, and offering a foundation for future research in the field of omnichannel retailing. Future research can provide valuable insights into the performance, challenges, and opportunities of omni-channel retailing, guiding retailers in optimizing their strategies for better customer experiences and operational success.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Zailani bin Abdullah, my tutor, for his invaluable advice, support, and constructive guidance throughout the thesis. Dr. Zailani not only helped in designing the project and generating innovative ideas but also provided diligent manuscript reviews and steadfast support, serving as a trusted mentor and friend along this journey. I would also like to extend special thanks to my family and friends for their unwavering support and assistance throughout the development of this thesis.

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