

Omni-channel retailing: exploring how retailers interweave touch points

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Abstract

To compete in the age of omni-channel retailing, retailers are engaged in designing and implementing solutions that aim at “creating intersections” across touch points. They intend at interweaving touch points so that consumers can easily switch from one to another – either from web to store or from store to web. The deployment of these solutions is complex and retailers wonder how to better address this issue. The academic literature does not provide many answers to this question of deploying omni-channel interweaving solutions across digital and physical touch points as the latter have neither been identified nor classified.

In this context, this research aims at improving the understanding of omni-channel retailing by (1) inventorying the omni-channel interweaving solutions presented in the literature, (2) carrying out a multiple case-study of six French retailers on the basis of 49 direct observations within different physical stores, six observations of websites and six observations of mobile applications, which allows to examine two research questions: (RQ1) Considering the possible omni-channel interweaving solutions, how do retailers use them and interconnect touch points? (RQ2) To what extent is the retail store design reconsidered in order to integrate these omni-channel interweaving solutions?

The results provide preliminary support for (1) a preference for web/mobile-to store services compared to store-to-web/mobile solutions; (2) for five motives – utilitarian, hedonic, relational, informational and economic – for the use of these solutions; (3) differentiated ways of considering these solutions in the retail store design and e-retail store design.

Keywords: omni-channel; retail design; integrated channel strategy; interweaving solutions