



## Omni-channel Retailing in the Fashion Industry: A Literature Review of Empirical Evidences

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*Introduction and Literature Review.* When many retailers are struggling with entering the e-tailing world, some pioneers in the fashion retail industry (e.g., Uniqlo, Nordstrom, Macy's, and Neiman Marcus) have already integrated their online and offline platforms and begun "turning the world into a showroom without walls" (Byrnjolfsson, Hu, & Rahman, 2013. P.24). This new and innovative business mode is called omni-channel retailing, which was defined as a fully-integrated approach to commerce that provides consumers a unified experience across online and offline channels (Beck & Rygl, 2015). For example, Macy's has a program named click-and-collect, which integrates its digital wallet into both the Macy's app and website. No matter where and how consumers shop, either in Macy's store or online, or whether placing orders from their laptops or iPhone, they have access to the consistent services or benefits that Macy's offers, such as the store's loyalty program, special offers, and the various payment options (Park & Lee, 2017). Moreover, big data technology has enabled retailers to provide convenient and fast services to their customers. Neiman Marcus's app can tell consumers if a certain size of the shoes they had searched previously are available in the nearest store, so they can go to that location and purchase products right away. Omni-channel retailing is a popular topic in the fashion industry for another reason that its appearance gives both marketers and academic researchers a hope for addressing the issue of high rate of product returns in the fashion e-tail industry due to unfitting size and unexpected look (Galipoglu et al., 2018; McCormick et al., 2014). Even though many previous researchers have examined some of the key factors in omni-channel retailing, such as the unique distribution and supply chain system, many research areas still stay unexplored and demand more attention (Chen & Chi, 2017; Lee, 2017). Galipoglu et al. (2018) claimed that limited theoretical foundation was a problem for omni-channel retailing research because researchers did not contribute much to the development of fundamental algorithms that can be used to solve certain omni-channel-related problems. Thus, this study conducted a content-analysis literature review to investigate what problems have already been investigated by prior researchers and what problems that were neglected but critical to the success of omni-channel retailing and need to be further explored.

*Methodology.* The authors obtained 80 peer-reviewed articles related to the research topic by searching key words (e.g., omni-channel, retail, marketing, distribution, fashion, and apparel) on search engines such as Google Scholar and Search IT. When searching for the relevant papers, the researchers used all possible combinations of the terms, including their plural forms, suffixes and delimiters. This research ended up having a sample of 31 relevant scholarly papers published in peer-reviewed journals. 27 of the papers are in top-tier journals in the field of business, marketing, management, e-commerce, and retailing, with Scientific Journal Rankings (SJR) Q1, and four papers are in top journals in the textile and apparel field with Q1 or Q2 rankings (see

Table 1). We conducted a systematic content analysis of all gathered research papers to identify the themes emerged from prior studies and uncover those areas that are critical but under researched in the field of omni-channeling fashion retailing.

Table 1. Number of Research Articles by Journal

Journal Name	Number of articles	H Index	Quartiles
International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management	6	61	Q1&Q2
International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management	5	85	Q1
Journal of Marketing	2	208	Q1
MIT Sloan Management Review	2	85	Q1
Journal of Interactive Marketing	2	82	Q1
European Journal of Operational Research	1	211	Q1
Journal of Marketing Research	1	141	Q1
Decision Support Systems	1	115	Q1
Journal of Retailing	1	111	Q1
International Journal of Production Research	1	107	Q1
Journal of Service Research	1	97	Q1
International Journal of Electronic Commerce	1	70	Q1
Production Planning & Control	1	61	Q1
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	1	57	Q1
Telematics and Informatics	1	42	Q1
Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management	1	37	Q1&Q2
Journal of the Textile Institute	1	33	Q2
Textile Progress	1	18	Q2
Journal of Global Fashion Marketing	1	9	Q1&Q2

*Findings and Discussion.* One of the most popular themes in omni-channeling fashion retailing is channel migration. Several previous studies investigated the impact of channel migration, such as the influence of adding a new channel on sales, purchase intentions, consumer retention etc. This theme is associated with concepts, such as channel cannibalization and synergy, and channel integration. Another major theme focused by prior research is utilities, which investigates product utility, and shopping process utility that consumers evaluate when making purchase or channel choice decisions. In some previous studies, the utilities were considered as capabilities of a channel that allow consumers to achieve their shopping goals. Logistics is another commonly studied theme in omni-channeling fashion retailing. This theme was examined through the perspectives of integrated warehouse operations (Wollenburg et al., 2018). However, warehouse is not the only element that enables fast and rapid omni-channel logistic services. An efficient information system is also required for successfully transforming multi-channel retailing into omni-channel retailing.

Company contingency was identified as one of less developed area in omni-channel fashion retailing. Previous researchers suggested that more studies should be conducted to see how

company contingency, such as brand equity, product type, related to omni-channel retailing issues (e.g., channel preference, and return rate). For example, when deciding which channel to shop for luxury purses, consumers are more likely to choose online stores as long as the online retailers are trustworthy because purse is the kind of product that does not highly rely on sizes, so consumers are less concerned about the fitting issues when they purchase online. Another theme that demands more research to gain better knowledge is inventory management. Omni-channel retailing needs a more efficient and effective inventory management system, so consumers could receive the correct product and consistent service efficiently at any locations, while companies do not need to pay extra for an additional inventory management system when integrating their online and offline channels (Ishfaq et al., 2016). Another missing point lies in the supply chain of omni-channel retailing. Very few articles addressed manufacturers' roles and their functions in the omni-channel retail supply chain (Melacini et al., 2018). This topic has only been mentioned in the articles about mass customization and made-to-measure services.

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