

Master
Management & Industrial Strategy

Master's Final Work
Dissertation

**SEAMLESS OMNICHANNEL INTEGRATION:
ENHANCING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN
RETAIL**

Carolina Dias Elvas Baptista

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Supervisor:
Professor Graça Miranda Silva

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ABSTRACT

With the rise of internet connectivity and technological improvements, customer behaviour has changed, leading to expectations of simultaneous and seamless use of multiple channels. These changes are driving a new business model that prioritises the customer-brand relationship, requiring retailers to focus on understanding how they can optimise value to deliver a more personalised experience. As a result, retailers have increased their investment in omnichannel retailing and need to make accurate assessments in order to respond to the evolving retail market and deliver a consistent and seamless customer experience.

The aim of this study is to test the proposed conceptual model, which analyses the impact of a seamless experience on customer satisfaction, as well as its effects on repurchase intentions, word of mouth, trust in the retailer and continuance intentions.

The results indicate that a seamless experience has a positive effect on customer satisfaction, as well as on continuance intention, repurchase intention, word of mouth and trust in the retailer. In addition, customer satisfaction has a positive effect on continuance intention, repurchase intention, word of mouth and trust in the retailer. Virtual store quality has a direct positive effect on satisfaction. However, physical store quality does not have a significant effect on customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Seamless Omnichannel Experience; Retail; Customer Satisfaction, Continuous Intention; Trust in Retailer; Word of Mouth

RESUMO

Com o aumento da conectividade à Internet e os avanços tecnológicos, o comportamento dos clientes sofreu transformações significativas, resultando em expectativas de utilização simultânea e integrada de múltiplos canais. Estas mudanças impulsionaram o desenvolvimento de um novo modelo de negócio que prioriza a relação cliente-marca, exigindo que os retalhistas se concentrem em compreender os benefícios que podem otimizar para oferecer uma experiência mais personalizada. Neste sentido, os retalhistas intensificaram os seus investimentos no retalho omnicanal, sendo necessário realizar avaliações rigorosas para acompanhar a evolução do mercado e proporcionar uma experiência de consumo unificada e integrada.

O objetivo deste estudo é analisar o impacto de uma experiência fluida e integrada na satisfação do cliente, bem como as suas implicações nas intenções de recompra, no *word of mouth*, na confiança no retalhista e na intenção de continuidade, com base no modelo conceptual proposto. O modelo foi testado com 149 respostas válidas recolhidas através de um questionário online.

Os resultados indicam que uma experiência integrada influencia positivamente a satisfação do cliente, bem como a intenção de continuidade, a intenção de recompra, o *word of mouth* e a confiança no retalhista. Adicionalmente, verificou-se que a satisfação do cliente tem um impacto positivo na intenção de continuidade, na intenção de recompra, no *word of mouth* e na confiança no retalhista. A qualidade da loja virtual apresenta um efeito positivo direto na satisfação do cliente; no entanto, a qualidade da loja física não demonstrou ter um impacto significativo na satisfação.

Palavras-chave: Experiência Omnicanal Integrada; Retalho; Satisfação do Cliente; Intenção Contínua; Confiança no Retalhista; *Word of mouth*.

TABLE OF CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
RESUMO.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENT	1
LIST OF FIGURES	2
LIST OF TABLES	2
SYMBOLS AND NOTATION	3
1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
2.1. <i>Customer experience along the omnichannel journey</i>	6
2.2. <i>Seamless shopping experience</i>	8
2.3. <i>Omnichannel Customer Satisfaction</i>	10
2.4. <i>Conceptual model and research hypotheses</i>	12
3. METHODOLOGY.....	16
3.1. <i>Target Population and sampling</i>	16
3.2. <i>Data collection</i>	17
3.3. <i>Questionnaire</i>	17
3.4. <i>Measures</i>	18
4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.....	20
4.1. <i>Sample characterization</i>	20
4.1.1. <i>Omnichannel Shopping Experience</i>	20
4.1.2. <i>Respondent Profile</i>	24
4.2. <i>SEM results</i>	25
4.2.1. <i>Measurement Model</i>	26
4.2.2. <i>Hypotheses testing and discussion</i>	28

5. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS	32
5.1. <i>Limitations</i>	32
5.2. <i>Theoretical Contributions</i>	33
5.3. <i>Practical Implications</i>	33
5.4. <i>Future recommendations</i>	34
REFERENCES	35
APPENDIX A - Measurement Scales.....	51

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - Conceptual Model	16
Figure 2 - Empirical Model.....	31

LIST OF TABLES

Table I - Types of products acquired in the most recent purchase using multiple channels (online, physical store, or app).....	21
Table II - Type of retailer used in the most recent purchase using multiple channels....	21
Table IV- Channels used in the product research process.....	22
Table V - Channels used in the purchase process.....	22
Table VI - Channels used in the post-purchase process	22
Table VII - Quantity of items acquired in the most recent purchase using multiple shopping channels	23
Table VIII – Frequency of Purchases involving multiple channels (online, physical store, or app) before, during, or after the transaction	23
Table IX - Device more frequently used among shoppers utilizing multiple channels 8	23
Table X - Gender of Respondents.....	24
Table XI- Age of Respondents	24
Table XII- Professional qualifications of respondents	24
Table XIII- Educational qualifications of respondents	25

Table XIV - Gross Monthly Income of Respondents.....	25
Table XV – Correlation Matrix	27
Table XVI - Heterotrait Monotrait ratio (HTMT)	28
Table XVII - Estimated coefficients (β) and T-statistics for the tested hypothesis.....	30

SYMBOLS AND NOTATION

AVE – Average Variance Extracted

CR – Composite Reliability

PLS – Partial Least Squares

1. INTRODUCTION

With the growing availability of the internet and advancements in technology, that granted further digitalization in the retail industry, customers now expect being able to use a wide range of channels and devices simultaneously and seamlessly throughout the decision-making process (Picot-Coupey et al., 2016; Verhoef et al., 2015). They do so, for example, by browsing for information in one channel and making a purchase in another. Another option could be buying the product online and pick it up in the store. Customers anticipate receiving consistent information across all channels and experiencing a uniform buying experience that breaks down the barriers between channels (Juaneda-Ayensa et al., 2016).

Leading global companies are embracing omnichannel management strategies to meet the increasing demand for access to goods and services facilitated by digital and sharing economy business models. As a result, operations associated with omnichannel retailing pose a challenge to both established and new businesses, as they need to make accurate decisions to adapt to the evolving retail market (Cai & Lo, 2020).

This shift in consumer behaviour has prompted retailers to increase their investments in Omnichannel retailing, with the goal of combining all consumer touchpoints to deliver a unified, seamless customer experience (Cummins et al., 2016; Melsted, 2015). From these changes a new business model emerges that prioritises customer-brand relationship above channel (Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014). Retailers can better meet their customers' needs by combining channels and trying to understand which benefits they can maximize and which inadequacies must be addressed (Zhang et al., 2010), allowing them to give a more tailored experience. Retailers will achieve a deeper understanding of their customers' preferences, resulting in increased customer loyalty (Mosquera et al., 2017).

The effectiveness of an omnichannel retailing strategy depends on how well the several channels are interconnected, as this is crucial for maintaining and engaging omnichannel consumers within their environment (Huré et al., 2017; Saghiri et al., 2017). Currently, retailers do not have clear guidelines on how to effectively offer a smooth experience for omnichannel consumers (Cai & Lo, 2020). This may be attributed to the absence of a universally accepted definition and a suitable method of measurement that promotes a shared understanding of what constitutes a seamless experience, as well as how customers evaluate it.

The purpose of this study is to empirically examine the impact of a seamless experience on customer satisfaction, as well as its effect on repurchase intention, word of mouth, trust in the retailer and continuance intention. The proposed conceptual model also analyses the effect of physical and virtual store quality on customer satisfaction. This study focuses on the empirical setting of omni-channel retailing. A quantitative research approach was adopted, using an online questionnaire distributed via social networks and email. This study contributes to the literature in the sense that, despite the presence of multiple studies pointing to the existence of a relationship between seamless experience and customer satisfaction, Chang and Li (2022) highlight that these relationships have not yet been clearly explained. To date, there have been few studies validating the impact of the seamless experience on four crucial and distinct customer behavioural outcomes: repurchase intention, word of mouth (WOM), trust in the retailer and continuous intention. The present research enhances our comprehension of the precise meaning of seamless experience and also the factors most valued by customers, which impact their level of satisfaction and future behaviours towards the business. Hence, retailers must consider these factors as their guide in order to provide a highly efficient and seamless experience to omnichannel customers.

This study is divided in 5 chapters. The first chapter refers to the introduction, which presents the chosen topic, the scope, the objectives of the work and the relevance of the study. The second chapter contains the literature review, where the theoretical foundations are discussed, as well as the study hypotheses and the proposed conceptual model. The third chapter covers the research methodology used, which includes data collection, the target population and sample selection, drawing up the questionnaire and defining the latent variables used in the conceptual model. The fourth chapter analyses and discusses the results obtained. Finally, the fifth chapter summarises the conclusions of this work, also indicating its limitations and suggesting proposals for future studies.

The quality of virtual stores positively influences customer satisfaction, whereas the quality of physical stores does not have a significant impact on customer satisfaction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Customer experience along the omnichannel journey

Omnichannel management has evolved from the existing knowledge base on multichannel, which in turn originated from mono-channel (Bin Oh & Teo, 2010; Lee & Kim, 2010). Mono-channel refers to the practice of selling exclusively through a single channel, such as a physical store, without the presence of any other channels. With the advancement of e-commerce and digitalization in marketing, organisations have begun make some changes and started to operate in both online and physical realms, while also incorporating other channels into their operations (Leeflang et al., 2014). To achieve multichannel integration, a business must adopt a new organisational model that aligns people, processes, and technology in order to effectively manage many channels (Stone et al., 2002). However, there is often a lack of operational coordination in multichannel retailing (Beck & Rygl, 2015). Several touchpoints are run separately, leading to the existence of operational and technological walls for channel content (Hübner et al., 2016; Shareef et al., 2016).

A multichannel strategy in which channels are handled independently is considered outdated; consequently, a new technique was designed to successfully manage interchangeable channels and integrate touchpoints (Cao & Li, 2015). This was achieved by highlighting the advantages of each channel, thereby enhancing the overall customer experience (Verhoef et al., 2015). Omnichannel enables the construction of value and the development of relationships by blurring the boundaries between channels, thereby providing customers and retailers with a seamless and unified service experience (Huré et al., 2017; Melero et al., 2016; Shen et al., 2018). Brynjolfsson et al. (2013) believes the transition from multichannel to omnichannel offers challenges requiring a re-evaluation of competing methods from retailers and their supply-chain associates.

The concept of customer experience is subject to variability throughout time and in different locations. The phenomenon may be examined as it undergoes changes and develops over a customer's journey across several touchpoints (Rawson et al., 2013). In the realm of single and multichannel shopping, the concept of customer experience has been outlined from several viewpoints (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Customer experience is often defined as a broad and multidimensional concept that includes a customer's mental, emotional, behavioural, sensory, and relational responses. This experience is derived from both direct and indirect interactions

with a store and its brand, goods, and services (Brakus et al., 2009; Gentile et al., 2007; Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Recently, a number of experts have argued that studying the client journey is critical for gaining a better understanding of the customer experience, with research on the omnichannel consumer journey revealing that interactions with service providers can have a significant impact on purchasing experience and objectives (Cui et al., 2022; Lazaris et al., 2021).

Previous studies on the omnichannel customer experience have lacked a thorough examination of its effects on consumer behaviour. The rapid growth of omnichannel networks underscores the need for more extensive research, as perceived variations in service experience can significantly influence consumer engagement behaviour (Kumar et al., 2019), which has been discussed as an activity of sharing reviews and feelings towards the firm (Brodie et al., 2011; Kumar et al., 2010; Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

Studies on Omnichannel customer experience have mainly focused on investigating methods to improve the customer's journey from the perspective of the retailer. Consequently, scholars have suggested feasible strategies within this framework.

Picot-Coupey et al. (2016) conducted a new empirical study that focused on five strategy-related challenges: organisational, cultural, managerial, marketing, and financial issues. Additionally, they examined three development-related challenges: retailing-mix, information systems (IS), and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) issues. Their findings concluded that transitioning to an omnichannel strategy requires a two-step process: an exploratory phase in which companies identify key challenges and experiment with solutions, followed by an exploitative phase in which successful strategies are systematically implemented and scaled. This approach emphasises the necessity of trial-and-error learning, with initial testing like pop-up stores playing a critical part in developing omnichannel strategies.

On the other hand, using a four-stage Delphi approach, von Briel (2018) identified four core insights that proved to be particularly valuable for retailers to enhance omnichannel customer experience: customer experience, human capabilities, store digitisation and business operations that should be considered in the retail sector. The first core insight suggests that retailers will prioritise the total customer experience, requiring high quality and adaptability to meet evolving consumer demands. The second suggests that to create and successfully deliver a seamless omnichannel experience, retail leaders will need to change their organisational

approach by enhancing human capabilities. The third core insight suggests that retailers should invest in digital technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and mobile devices to enhance the customer experience, personalise shopping and integrate seamlessly into the omnichannel experience. The fourth core insight shows that in an omnichannel environment, business operations must constantly adapt to evolving needs, blurring organisational boundaries to deliver seamless customer experiences and increase retailer productivity. von Briel's four-stage Delphi research on the future of omnichannel retail highlights the trend towards seamless integration of retail channels to improve the overall customer experience and operational efficiency. More recently, Bijmolt et al. (2021) introduced a new framework, within the context of omnichannel, to explore the correlations and challenges that occur in three key decision areas: (i) inventory and assortment, (ii) distribution and delivery, and (iii) returns. These decision areas serve as a bridge between company's marketing (with a focus on the customer journey) and operations (with a focus on product flow) departments. This model can be used as a guide for companies to shape their own business models, particularly those who are eager to enhance their omnichannel experience. Additionally, it will also assist companies in reducing conflicts, taking advantages upon opportunities prospects, and formulating consistent marketing and operational strategies.

Many studies do not adequately assess how to enhance omnichannel customer experience from the customers perspective and its consequences on customer behaviours. Consequently, in recent years, there has been a rise in new models aimed at examining the effects on customer behaviours and assessing the importance of a seamless experience in fostering long-lasting relationships between customers and businesses (Chang & Li, 2022).

2.2. Seamless shopping experience

The literature acknowledges that although seamlessness has attracted the attention of numerous scholars (e.g., Ieva & Ziliani, 2018; Mosquera et al., 2018), research outlining the essential components of a seamless omnichannel interaction experience is still lacking due to its subjectivity. In the field of omnichannel retailing, scholars such as Brynjolfsson et al. (2013) define a “seamless” shopping experience as one in which the distinctions between all of the different available channels disappear, turning the world into a 'showroom without walls'. In line with this definition, Gasparin et al. (2022) refer that seamless shopping journey relates to the consistency of each contact with a touchpoint when the consumer shifts across channels.

The smoothness of the transition between multiple retail channels is the primary distinguishing factor in omnichannel retailing.

Chang and Li (2022) highlight the importance of customers' cumulative experiences at many touchpoints across their whole omnichannel buying process. They emphasise that a seamless customer experience occurs when customers meet consistent service content and product information across various touchpoints. Additionally, customers should be able to move between shopping activities without losing information or having to start over in their purchasing environment.

Customers are rapidly demanding integration across all channels—offline, online, and mobile. Retailers are therefore urged to modify their current channel layout in order to ensure that there are no gaps while switching between channels, effectively blurring those lines (Huré et al., 2017; Melero et al., 2016). A report conducted by Accenture (Carroll & Guzman, 2015) highlighted the importance of recognising evolving consumer expectations, having a deep understanding of customers, delivering personalized services, and coordinating experiences across all points of contact to provide a seamless omni-channel retailing experience.

Two main dimensions have been recognised as crucial for comprehending customers' capacity to transition effortlessly between channels: Continuity and Consistency. According to Verhoef (2015) continuity happens when from the search, purchase and after sales phases the process progress in a seamless way across channels. In other words, retailers have used several resources to integrate channels (Hakanen & Jaakkola, 2012) in order to enable a seamless transition across channels and create an integrated customer experience (Kumar, 2018). An instance of continuity is demonstrated when a consumer includes products in their online shopping cart, and those items are also visible when they access the mobile application or visit the physical store. This demonstrates that the switches between channels are interchangeable.

Consistency refers to the degree to which customers want to experience smooth effortless transitions while perceiving the same benefits across touchpoints (Homburg et al., 2017). A study carried out by Cao and Li (2015), in the context of omnichannel, identified some practices to establish consistency and standardisation across many touchpoints. These practices include standardising promotion, transaction, pricing, order fulfilment, reverse logistics, product information and customer service. Customers value this homogeneity through their shopping

journey. An example of inconsistent price information might be when a consumer sees a price of €50 for a product on a website, but discovers that the same product costs €60 in a physical store. In 1992, the notion of a seamless shopping journey was introduced as an internal reaction that triggers behavioural outcomes (Bitner, 1992). This concept consists of three dimensions: customer engagement, retailer switching, and basket size (Stone et al., 2002; Wallace et al., 2004). A recent study developed by Rodríguez-Torrico et al. (2020) has established a paradigm in the field of multichannel literature and omnichannel research. The model defines the seamless omnichannel interaction experience based on three dimensions: consistency, channel choice freedom and channel synchronisation.

In this study, similar to Chang and Li's (2022) research, the seamless experience includes six dimensions: availability of links, consistency of sales strategies, visibility of information, ease of payment, flexibility of fulfilment and convenience of sharing.

2.3. Omnichannel Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction can be defined as the customer's overall evaluation of how well a product or service has performed (Johnson & Fornell, 1991). Many studies show that customer satisfaction leads to beneficial behaviour patterns that improve financial profitability and business results (e.g., Pauwels & Neslin, 2015; Pedragosa & Correia, 2009). In an omnichannel environment, where customers interact with brands through multiple interconnected touchpoints, satisfaction is influenced by the seamlessness and integration of these interactions, making it a more complex and dynamic process (Verhoef et al., 2015).

According to the traditional expectancy disconfirmation satisfaction model developed by Oliver (1980), satisfaction is based on a comparison between customers' expectations (expected quality) and the customer perceptions of the service provided (perceived quality). According to the expectancy disconfirmation model, a positive disconfirmation occurs when perceived performance surpasses customer expectations, leaving the consumer pleased. A negative disconfirmation happens when perceived performance falls short of a customer's expectations, resulting in dissatisfaction.

Churchill and Surprenant (1982) proposed a viewpoint that involves making a trade-off between the costs and advantages of acquiring an item or service and comparing them to the anticipated outcomes in order to determine satisfaction. On the other hand, Kumar et al. (2014)

stated that a client's behaviour towards a business is likely to be influenced by their satisfaction, implying that there should be a positive association between satisfaction and firm performance. In an omnichannel strategy, the seamless integration of channels is essential for improving client retention and boosting financial success. Studies show that firms with well-integrated omnichannel experiences report significantly higher purchase frequency, order value, and engagement rates (Hossain et al., 2020).

Customer satisfaction plays a vital role in determining the success of a product or service (Bhattacharjee, 2001). Customers who are more satisfied are more likely to want to continue using the product or service. Conversely, a customer's decision to switch to a new product or service provider may be influenced by a significant level of dissatisfaction (Bhattacharjee et al., 2012). Previous studies have also shown that customer behaviour is the result of prolonged inertia, which can prevent customers from switching to other alternatives, even when they are dissatisfied (e.g., Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). Juaneda-Ayensa et al. (2016) study show that customer satisfaction in omnichannel retailing is further influenced by channel integration, which influences purchase intentions and brand loyalty. Their research also shows that perceived simplicity of use and personal innovativeness have a substantial impact on how customers interact with omnichannel experiences, validating the notion that a well-integrated system can improve satisfaction and reduce switching behaviour. Similarly, Lazaris et al. (2021) research shows that omnichannel integration increases customer satisfaction and loyalty. Their study also discovered that consumers in integrated surroundings have a greater sense of flow, which increases engagement and perceived value of the shopping experience.

Within the realm of emotions, Giese and Cote (2002) define satisfaction as a strong emotional reaction to the immediate and short-lived product advantages experienced upon purchase. This emotional reaction diminishes and transforms into a lasting appreciation of the advantages provided by the product during its lifespan or the duration of the consumer's relationship with it.

The satisfaction level of a customer in an omnichannel setting is closely linked to their view of how well the omnichannel service is integrated (Hamouda, 2019). According to the multi-channel and omnichannel service literature, customer satisfaction refers to customer overall assessment of their buying experience across several channels (Herhausen et al., 2019; Sousa & Voss, 2006).

2.4. Conceptual model and research hypotheses

Previous studies have shown that promoting integrated channels from the retailer's perspective and a seamless shopping experience from the customer's perspective can increase brand awareness and satisfaction (Asmare & Zewdie, 2022; Zhang et al., 2018). Gao and Huang (2024) found a positive relationship between a seamless omnichannel shopping experience and consumer's attitudes towards retailer when switching between the retailer's different channels. Other studies (e.g., Chang & Li, 2022; Lazaris et al., 2021; Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2020; Wiese, 2024) also support the idea that improved seamlessness between channels will have a positive effect on customer satisfaction. Based on the information provided above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Seamless experience positively influences customers' satisfaction.

A recent study developed by Singh and Pandey (2024) found a positive effect of SE on customers' repurchase intention. The research conducted by Lemke et al. (2011) reveals similar results, confirming that a positive customer experience, which can be interpreted as a seamless experience, is likely to lead to favourable outcomes, such as repurchase intention. However, Pasaribu and Pasaribu (2021) showed a nonsignificant influence of a seamless customer experience on repurchase intentions. This implies that although efficient service configuration and integrated interactions may promote repeated purchases, the overall impact is not substantial. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Seamless experience positively influences customers' repurchase intention.

Chang and Li (2022) found a positive relationship between seamless experience and word of mouth. If customers perceive their seamless experience in omnichannel shopping as excellent, they are more likely to share positive information about the retailer or brand, which is reflected in their word of mouth behaviour. A more recent study developed by Li and Chang (2024) found similar results. Rodríguez-Torrico et al. (2023) state that as the environment becomes more seamless, participants feel enhanced flow and thus exhibit a higher propensity to engage in positive word of mouth. A recent study developed by Akturan and Kuter (2024) in the context of fashion retailing, found that when retailers establish connectivity across different channels, consumers talk positively about that experience. Based on the information above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Seamless experience positively influences customers' WOM.

Direct positive relationship between consumer perception of channel integration and trust, as they recognize that when consumers have a well-integrated shopping experience across multiple channels, it alleviates their insecurities and builds their confidence in the retailer (Cheah et al., 2022). Previous studies (e.g., Yang et al., 2024) study support a direct positive relationship between consumer perception of channel integration and trust. In the context of retail companies, Bahri et al. (2023) also found that the omnichannel experience has a positive influence on trust, showing that a seamless and integrated shopping experience increases consumer trust in the retail brand. Studies developed in other contexts such as omnichannel banking (Tran Xuan et al., 2023) found that the quality of integration plays a crucial role in creating a seamless experience, which in turn has a positive effect on the level of trust customers have in the bank. In view of the above, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Seamless experience positively influences customers' trust in the retailer.

Francioni et al. (2018) argue that when customers highly value a certain atmosphere it enhances their enjoyment and improves their purchasing experience. Several previous studies (e.g., Effendy, 2019; Miswanto & Angelia, 2017; Tunjungsari et al., 2016) found that perceived service quality positively affects satisfaction. Other studies (Jalil et al., 2016; Rafika & Yulhendri, 2020; Yulisetiari & Mawarni, 2021) claim that improvements in the store environment can enhance customer satisfaction,. This relationship was also empirically supported in recent studies (e.g., Dialoka & Soebiantoro, 2024; Sulistiono et al., 2024). However, other studies found that physical store characteristics (e.g., shop environment and staff helpfulness) had no significant influence on consumer engagement with omnichannel merchants (e.g., Lee et al., 2019; Melisa et al., 2024)

Studies conducted in the context of supermarkets (Kim, 2013; Ting & Chen, 2002) support the notion that enhancements in physical shop quality may result in increased consumer satisfaction. In line with the above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Physical store quality positively influences customers' satisfaction.

Szymanski and Hise (2000) suggest that the enjoyable shopping experience customers encounter is positively related with the quality of the virtual store. Seng and Mahmoud (2020)

state that the presentation of a high-quality webpage enhances customers' positive emotions, resulting in increased satisfaction levels. The positive relationship between virtual store quality and customer satisfaction is supported by several studies (e.g., Abrar et al., 2017; Bai et al., 2008; Ha & Im, 2012; Kim & Stoel, 2004; Lin, 2007; Oh et al., 2009; Pee et al., 2019; Seck & Philippe, 2013). In line with the above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Virtual store quality positively influences customers' satisfaction.

Ganesan (1994) asserts that satisfaction enhances impressions of the other party's credibility and empathy, resulting in developing trust. The studies of Walter et al. (2000) and Erciş et al. (2012) corroborate this premise.

In the context of retail banking previous studies (e.g., Boonlertvanich, 2019; Lee & Moghavvemi, 2015; Román, 2003) suggest that customer satisfaction leads to higher levels of trust. Similar results were found in the studies of Flavián et al. (2006), Horppu et al. (2008) and Kassim and Asiah Abdullah (2010) in the context of online purchases. Based on the above arguments, we propose the following hypothesis:

H7: Customer satisfaction positively influences trust in the retailer.

Wangenheim and Bayón (2007) suggest that the more satisfied customers are, the more they intend to recommend and make positive comments. The research conducted by Mazzarol et al. (2007) indicates that satisfaction is an antecedent to word of mouth (WOM) communication. Several studies (Marcos & Coelho, 2022; Melastri & Giantari, 2019; Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003; Sallam, 2016; Thabit & Hadj Aissa, 2019) suggest that satisfied customers tend to be more likely to recommend the product or service to others. Tripathi (2018) asserts that satisfied consumers share their shopping experiences with others. Moreover, other studies (Artanti & Muhammad, 2016; Butt et al., 2021; Kasiri et al., 2017) corroborate the idea that customers who are highly satisfied with service quality readily spread positive word of mouth.

In the context of online retail, Ahmadinejad (2019) and Duarte et al. (2018) also found a positive relationship between satisfaction and word of mouth. Similar results were found by Curtis et al. (2011), in the retail sector. Based on the previously arguments, we propose the following hypothesis:

H8: Customer satisfaction positively influences word of mouth.

Customer satisfaction is directly influenced by their assessment of the quality of their experience, which in turn affects their relationship with the company, leading to repurchase and retention (Lemke et al., 2011). The positive relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention is supported in several studies (e.g., Anita et al., 2021; Chiu & Cho, 2019; Fang et al., 2014; Jung & Kim, 2022; Mittal & Kamakura, 2001; Mustikasari et al., 2021; Wen et al., 2011). A study in the context of integrated service touchpoints carried out by Boisvert and Khan (2023). In the context of online clothing retailers, Tsai et al. (2016) recognize satisfaction as a crucial factor in influencing repurchase intention. Considering what has been previously stated, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H9: Customer satisfaction positively influences repurchase intention.

Satisfaction is fundamental to continuous intention (Liang & Zhang, 2012). In their study on e-grocery retail mobile applications, Kumar et al. (2023) support this idea showing that customer satisfaction has a positive and significant impact on continuous intention. This relationship has also been supported in studies related to e-learning services (Pereira et al., 2015; Rajeh et al., 2021); e-commerce marketplace platforms (Kim & Yum, 2024); usage of retail mobile applications (Alalwan, 2020; Al-Nabhani et al., 2022) and the usage of social media platforms (Sharabati et al., 2022). In view of the arguments presented above, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H10: Customer satisfaction positively influences continuous intention.

Research, such as that conducted by Lemke et al. (2011), indicates that delivering an exceptional seamless experience to customers fosters the establishment of enduring customer relationships, which in turn enhances their continuous purchasing intentions with the retailer.

H11: Seamless experience positively influences continuous intention.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual models as well as the proposed hypotheses.

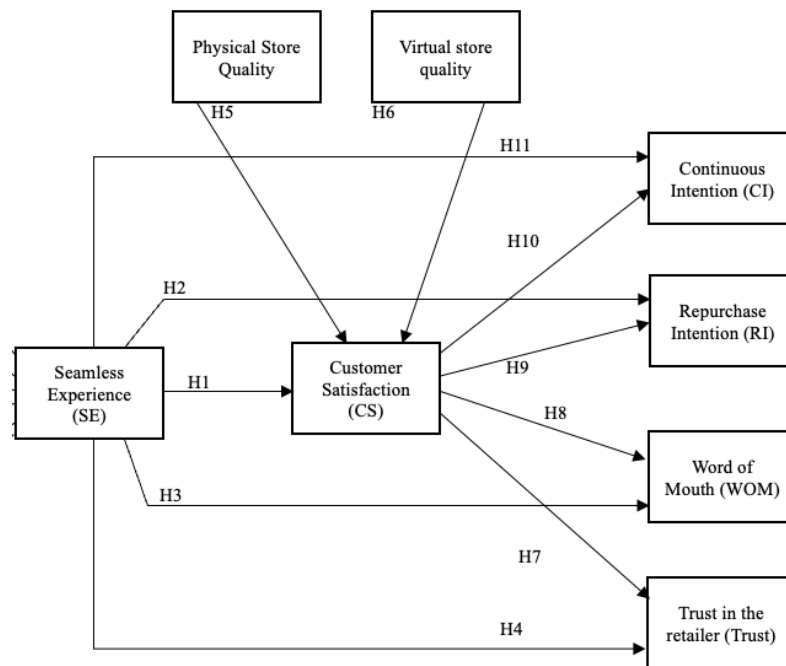


Figure 1 - Conceptual Model

Source: Own elaboration

3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodological procedures followed in this study. First, we describe the sampling procedure and the data collection method used, which in this study was a questionnaire. The structure of the questionnaire is also explained in this section. The second section describes the variables used in the conceptual model and the respective scales used to measure them.

3.1. Target Population and sampling

The target population of this study is consumers who have made a purchase using more than one channel (online, physical store or app) before, during or after the purchase in the last 6 months. In line with Santos and Gonçalves (2019), individuals who made multiple omnichannel purchases during the specified period were instructed to focus on their most recent purchase.

Data was collected through an online survey distributed through social media (Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp) and shared among friends and acquaintances. Potential respondents were selected through a convenience and snowball sampling. This non-probabilistic sampling

methods are recommended when it is impossible to identify every member of the target population before data collection, preventing random sampling (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2002).

Although it cannot be guaranteed that the sample is a fair representation of the entire population, Malhotra (2019) argues that a non-probability sample can still provide reliable estimates of the characteristics of the population. Moreover, the choice of this sampling method was based on its efficiency in terms of time and cost (Malhotra, 2019), and the ease of accessing respondents (Saunders et al., 2019). Furthermore, the snowball effect was used as a sample approach, wherein some respondents were incentivized to distribute the questionnaire (Goodman, 1961).

3.2.Data collection

The data collection tool used in this research was an anonymous online questionnaire created using the Limesurvey programme (www.limesurvey.org). The distribution of this questionnaire was facilitated through the use of social media platforms and email, with the primary objective of collecting data to evaluate the proposed hypotheses.

3.3.Questionnaire

In order to develop the questionnaire, an extensive literature review was carried out to gain a thorough understanding of how the variables in the model under investigation have been defined and measured. All scales used to measure the variables were adapted from the literature. The adaptations made to the scales took into account the translation from English to Portuguese, the research context and the language used in the questions, in order to ensure simplicity and clarity and to make them accessible to all study participants, regardless of their educational level. Prior to the full-scale questionnaire, a pre-tested was conducted with 15 consumers who met the selection criteria presented in section 3.1. This was done in order to identify any necessary modifications to ensure correct understanding by the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of six sections, beginning with a brief introduction that outlined the purpose of the research, the expected response time, and the assurance of answer anonymity. In addition, we expressed our gratitude to them for dedicating their time to complete the questionnaire.

Section 1 - Characterising the Omnichannel Purchase Process - consists of 10 questions. The purpose of this section is to assess the customer's experience of shopping across multiple channels. The first question acts as a filter question, ensuring that only individuals who meet

the specified selection criteria are allowed to complete the questionnaire. The remaining 9 ask in this section enquire about the specific product or products purchased by the respondent in their most recent multichannel transaction. It also asks about the type and name of the retailer, the channels used during the research, purchase, and post-purchase process, the number of products purchased, the frequency of multi-channel transactions, and the device used for shopping in such cases.

The purpose of Section 2 (Omnichannel Shopping Experience) was to analyse respondents' perceptions of the dimensions of the Seamless Experience, in particular the availability of links, consistency of sales strategy, visibility of information, ease of payment, flexibility of fulfilment, convenience of sharing, perceived seamless and perceived fluency. Section 3 (Retailer Satisfaction and Loyalty) aimed to assess the level of consumer satisfaction, continuance intention, repurchase intention, word of mouth and trust in the retailer selected. Section 4 (Retailer Physical Store) aimed to assess the respondent's experience in the retailer's physical store where they made their last omnichannel purchase, if applicable. Section 5 (Retailer's Web Store Quality) was designed to explore respondents' perceptions of their experience with the retailer's online store where they made their most recent omnichannel purchase.

3.4. Measures

In order to measure each of the constructs included in the proposed conceptual model, we use multi-item scales adapted from the literature. All variables in the model were measured on a 7-point Likert type scale, with 1 corresponding to “strongly disagree” and 7 corresponding to “strongly agree”.

Following Brynjolfsson et al. (2013), this study defines Seamless Experience (SE) as one in which the distinctions between different channels are eliminated, resulting in a universe that might be comparable to a "showroom without walls". This construct was measured as a higher-order construct with six dimensions, namely Availability of Links (AOL), Consistency of Sales Strategy (CSS), Information Visibility (IV), Simplicity of Payment (PS), Flexibility of Fulfilment (FOF) and Convenience of Sharing (COS).

Availability of Links (AOL), Simplicity of Payment (PS), and Convenience of Sharing (COS) were measured using three items scales adapted from Chang and Li (2022). The AOL refers to the ease of transitioning between different touchpoints for consumers to collect product information (Akter et al., 2019; Blut, 2016; Brynjolfsson et al. 2013; Parasuraman et

al., 2005). PS is defined as the degree to which consumers regard the cross-touchpoints payment procedures as being quick and effortless (Akter et al., 2019; Blut, 2016; Brynjolfsson et al., 2013; Loiacono et al., 2007; Seiders et al., 2007). COS relates to the ease with which customers perceive the process of sharing product links or experiences when transitioning across different touchpoints (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2018; Stein & Ramaseshan, 2020).

CSS was measured using 7 items adapted from Chang and Li (2022), Cocco and Demoulin (2022) and Lee et al. (2019). CSS relates to the degree to which consumers perceive uniformity in the pricing, promotion, and range of products communicated by retailers (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013; Oh et al., 2012; Shen et al., 2018; Sousa & Voss, 2006;; Wu & Chang, 2016).

Information Visibility (IV) was measured by 6 items adapted from Lee et al. (2019) and Chang and Li (2022). IV refers to the degree to which product-related information, including inventory and delivery status, as well as transaction records, can be easily accessed and retrieved (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013; Oh et al., 2012; Saghiri et al., 2017; Shen et al., 2018).

Finally, Flexibility Of Fulfilment (FOF) was measured using 4 items derived from Chang and Li (2022) and Shi et al. (2020). FOF refers to the ability of consumers to complete an order delivery process, such as picking up and returning items, in a flexible manner (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013; Gallino & Moreno, 2014; Gao & Su, 2017; Hübner et al., 2016; Oh et al., 2012; Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2003).

Customer Satisfaction (CS) was measured using 4 items adapted from Oliver (1980). CS is the validation or negation of a state in which consumers feel satisfied, neutral or dissatisfied when comparing their initial expectations with the actual experience (Amoroso & Lim, 2017). Continuance intention was measured by 4 items adapted from Bhattacharjee (2001). According to the author, the user's intention is to continue using an information system after the initial adoption phase. Repurchase Intention (RI) and Word Of Mouth (WOM) were both measured by 3 items derived from Parasuraman et al. (1996). According to the authors, RI refers to the probability or intention of a client to make another purchase of a product or service following their initial purchase. The variable WOM can be defined as an informal exchange of information about a product or service, influencing consumer attitudes and behaviours, and often acting as a reliable source of information (Arndt, 1967; Parasuraman et al., 1996).

Finally, Trust In The Retailer (TRUST) was measured by 4 items adapted from Rahman et al. (2022). This variable refers to the perception of confidence in the retailer, where customers believe that the retailer has the intention and capability to fulfil its commitments through various channels (Anderson & Weitz, 1989; Rahman et al., 2022).

Physical Store Quality (PSQ) was measured using 26 items adapted from Antwi et al. (2020) and Behera et al. (2023). This construct was operationalized as a second-order factor with six dimensions, namely cleanliness, scent, and temperature, assessment of music, colour, lighting, staff helpfulness. Four items were used to measure cleanliness, scent, and temperature. Music, lighting and colour dimensions were measured using six, five and three items respectively. Staff Helpfulness was measured using a four-item scale adopted from Antwi et al. (2020). PSQ involves consumers' subjective evaluations of the overall excellence of a physical retail environment (Baker et al., 2002; Behera et al., 2023).

Virtual Store Quality (VSQ) was assessed using six items adapted from Barnes and Vidgen (2002). VSQ was conceptualized as a second-order factor with two dimensions: usefulness and entertainment both of which were measured using three items. VSQ was defined as the perceived quality of a virtual store, which is determined by multiple dimensions that impact consumer perceptions and experiences (Barnes & Vidgen, 2002; Loiacono et al., 2007).

Appendix A presents the items used to measure each variable in the model and their respective sources.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter will present and analyse the results obtained from the questionnaire.

4.1. Sample characterization

4.1.1. Omnichannel Shopping Experience

The final sample obtained for the study was 149 valid responses. Table I illustrates the types of products purchased in the last transaction using multiple channels, revealing that clothing and apparel were the most frequently selected category, with 58.39% of respondents indicating these items, followed by electronics at 30.87%.

Table I - Types of products acquired in the most recent purchase using multiple channels (online, physical store, or app)

	Frequency	Percent
Electronic products	46	30,9%
Clothing/Apparel	87	58,4%
Toys	9	6,0%
Eletrical Home Appliances	24	16,1%
Automative	8	5,4%
Home appliances	39	26,2%
Others	25	16,8%

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding retailer type, the data shown in Table II indicate that over half of the respondents (51%) favoured stores with a wide product variety, while 28.2% chose speciality stores.

Table II - Type of retailer used in the most recent purchase using multiple channels

	Frequency	Percent
Shop that sells a specific type of product (e.g. Sephora, Apple, FootLocker)	42	28,2%
A shop that sells a wide variety of products, such as clothes, electrical appliances, books, etc. (e.g. El Corte Inglés, IKEA, Leroy Merlin)	76	51,0%
Hypermarkets	17	11,4%
Others	14	9,4%
Total	149	100,0%

Source: Own elaboration

Table III illustrates that nearly one-fourth of the respondents (23.5%) made their most recent purchase at El Corte Inglés, while 10.7% chose Zara and 7.4% opted for Fnac. The remaining 58.4% of respondents purchased from a variety of other retailers."

Table III – Retailer used in the most recent purchase using multiple channels

	Frequency	Percent
El Corte Inglés	35	23,5%
Zara	16	10,7%
Fnac	11	7,4%
IKEA	11	7,4%
Worten	10	6,7%
Others	66	44,3%
Total	149	100,0%

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the product research phase, most respondents relied on web stores, with 66.4% selecting this channel, while 45.6% preferred visits to physical stores (See Table IV).

Table IV- Channels used in the product research process

	Frequency	Percent
Web store	99	66,4%
Mobile app	48	32,2%
Social Media	9	6,0%
Physical shop visit	68	45,6%
Not used	1	1,0%
Other	1	1,0%

Source: Own elaboration

In the purchase process, as shown in Table V, physical stores were preferred by 43% of consumers, while online stores accounted for 38.3%.

Table V - Channels used in the purchase process

	Frequency	Percent
Web store	57	38,3%
Mobile app	27	18,1%
Physical shop visit	64	43,0%
In-store kiosk/tablet	1	0,7%
Total	149	100,0%

Source: Own elaboration

For the post-purchase process, the physical store remained the main channel, used by 40.3% of respondents (Table VI).

Table VI - Channels used in the post-purchase process

	Frequency	Percent
Web store	29	19,5%
Physical shop	60	40,3%
Mobile app	10	6,7%
Customer support line	10	6,7%
Not used	39	26,2%
Other	1	0,7%
Total	149	100,0%

Source: Own elaboration

The majority of consumers (57.1%) buy one or two items (Table VII). In addition, 19.5% of respondents reported buying more than five items.

Table VII - Quantity of items acquired in the most recent purchase using multiple shopping channels

	Frequency	Percent
1	46	30,9%
2	39	26,2%
3	24	16,1%
4	9	6,0%
5	2	1,3%
More than 5	29	19,5%
Total	149	100,0%

Source: Own elaboration

Table VIII shows that the majority of respondents using multiple channels shop once a month or less (61.7%), while only 6.7% claim to make such purchases more than five times a month.

Table VIII – Frequency of Purchases involving multiple channels (online, physical store, or app) before, during, or after the transaction

	Frequency	Percent
Once a month or less	92	61,7%
Twice a month	37	24,8%
3-5 times a month	10	6,7%
More than 5 times a month	10	6,7%
Total	149	100,0%

Source: Own elaboration

Finally, Table IX shows that smartphones are the most commonly used device among multichannel consumers, with 59% of responses, followed by PCs with 37%.

Table IX - Device more frequently used among shoppers utilizing multiple channels

	Frequency	Percent
Smartphone	88	59,1%
Tablet	6	4,0%
PC	55	36,9%
Total	149	100%

Source: Own elaboration

4.1.2. Respondent Profile

Regarding gender (Table X), it is evident that the predominant proportion of respondents (71,1%) is female.

Table X - Gender of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Female	106	71,1%
Male	43	28,9%
Total	149	100%

Source: Own elaboration

The majority of respondents are between 41 and 60 years old (55%), as shown in Table XI.

Table XI- Age of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
18 to 25 years	28	18,8%
26 to 30 years	18	12,1%
31 to 40 years	13	8,7%
41 to 50 years	33	22,1%
51 to 60 years	49	32,9%
More than 60 years	8	5,4%
Total	149	100%

Source: Own elaboration

In terms of professional qualifications (Table XII), more than half of the respondents are employees, with 52.3%, followed by public servants with 24.2%.

Table XII- Professional qualifications of respondents.

	Frequency	Percent
Employee	78	52,3%
Public servant	36	24,2%
Self-Employed Worker	9	6,0%
Working Student	9	6,0%
Student	11	7,4%
Unemployed	1	0,7%
Retired	5	3,4%
Total	149	100%

Source: Own elaboration

The results presented in Table XIII show that in terms of educational qualifications, 46.3% of respondents have a bachelor's degree and 24.8% have completed secondary education.

Table XIII- Educational qualifications of respondents.

	Frequency	Percent
Primary school	2	1,3%
Secondary school	37	24,8%
Bachelor's degree	69	46,3%
Masters degree	28	18,8%
Doctorate	4	2,7%
Professional higher technical course	9	6,0%
Total	149	100%

Source: Own elaboration

Table XIV shows that 79.8% of respondents have a gross monthly income below 3000€.

Table XIV - Gross Monthly Income of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Up to 1000€	23	15,4%
Between 1001 and 2000€	68	45,6%
Between 2001 and 3000€	28	18,8%
Between 3001 and 4000€	6	4,0%
Over 4000€	4	2,7%
No Reply	20	13,4%
Total	149	100%

Source: Own elaboration

4.2.SEM results

To test the proposed conceptual model, this study used structural equation modelling , more specifically, Partial Least Squares (PLS) methodology (Gefen et al., 2000), which is a variance-based approach on the variance. The SmartPLS 4.0 software was used to test and evaluate the measurement and structural models.

The preference for the PLS methodology over the covariance-based approach arises from its lack of minimum sample size in terms of sample size restrictions (Hair et al., 2014; Hulland, 1999) and its capability to incorporate variables that do not follow a normal distribution. According to Chin, Marcolin and Newsted (2003) the PLS methodology enables researchers to

develop complex models incorporating latent variables, including second-order constructs, as demonstrated in this study.

As proposed by Hulland (1999) the empirical model was analysed and interpreted in two phases: in the first phase, the measurement model was analyzed and in the next phase, the structural model was tested. The measurement model evaluates the relationships between the items and the latent variables, whereas the structural model is assessed to examine the relationship between the endogenous variables and other latent variables in the model.

4.2.1. Measurement Model

The evaluation of the measurement model involve examining the individual reliability of items, the reliability of constructs, as well as convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017; Hulland, 1999).

The individual item reliability is assessed by examining the standardized loadings and their t statistic. The results obtained show that the loadings were all above the threshold of 0.70 and $p < 0.001$ (Hair et al., 2017). During the purification of scales, some items were deleted due to their loadings failing to meet the 0.7 threshold (Hair et al., 2017): CSS4 and CSS5 (measuring the consistency of the sales strategy variable), IV4 (measuring the information visibility variable), FOF2 (measuring the flexibility of fulfillment variable), CS4 (measuring the customer satisfaction variable), CI4 (measuring the continuous intention variable), TRUST4 (measuring trust in the retailer variable), TEMPERATURE4 (measuring the temperature variable), and LIGHTING1 (measuring the lighting variable). As can be seen in Appendix A, all other loadings are above the threshold of 0.70 and $p < 0.001$ (Hair et al., 2017), which is statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. Thus, individual indicator reliability was confirmed. The convergent validity and internal consistency reliability of the scales was evaluated by the average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliabilities (CRs).

Werts et al. (1974) argue that assessing the reliability of constructs can be done most effectively through Composite Reliability (CR), which should yield values of 0.7 or higher (Gefen et al., 2000; Hair et al., 2017). In this study, all CR values exceeded 0.7, with a maximum value of 0,964 for the “Usefulness” construct and a minimum of 0,814 for the “Information Visibility” construct.

To evaluate convergent validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). AVE measures the percentage of the total variance of the indicators that is explained by the latent variable, using the ratio of the sum of the explained variance and the

measurement error. According to Bagozzi and Yi, 1988, AVE should exceeded the threshold of 0.5. The results show a minimum value of 0,537 for “Seamless Experience” and a maximum value of 0,931 for “Usefulness”, supporting convergent validity.

The AVE, CR, Cronbach's Alpha values, loadings and respective t-values are shown in Appendix A.

Discriminant validity shows whether or not there are items of a certain variable that are correlated with other items of other variables. According to Fornelland and Larcker (1981) one of the criteria used to assess discriminant validity is to compare the square root of the AVE of each variable with the correlations between that variable and the other latent variables, ensuring that the square root of the AVE exceeds these correlations. Table XV shows that this condition is met for all variables, which supports discriminant validity. In addition, we used Heterotrait Monotrait ratio (HTMT) approach suggested by Hair et al. (2017). As reported in Table XVI, the HTMT values were below the threshold of 0.85 (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2015) for all constructs.

Table XV – Correlation Matrix

	CI	CS	Physical Store Quality	RI	SE	Trust	Virtual Store Quality	WOM
CI	0.873							
CS	0.731	0.946						
Physical Store Quality	0.505	0.404	0.782					
RI	0.757	0.680	0.492	0.876				
SE	0.598	0.678	0.533	0.596	0.733			
Trust	0.628	0.632	0.568	0.746	0.709	0.898		
Virtual Store Quality	0.510	0.617	0.585	0.559	0.657	0.634	0.916	
WOM	0.631	0.488	0.601	0.744	0.471	0.680	0.453	0.925

Caption: CI - Continuous Intention; CS - Customer Satisfaction; RI – Repurchase Intention; SE – Seamless Experience; WOM – Word of Mouth.

Source: Own elaboration

Table XVI - Heterotrait Monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	CI	CS	Physical Store Quality	RI	SE	Trust	Virtual Store Quality	WOM
CI								
CS	0.812							
Physical Store Quality	0.567	0.429						
RI	0.889	0.749	0.556					
SE	0.673	0.719	0.573	0.663				
Trust	0.728	0.692	0.629	0.868	0.779			
Virtual Store Quality	0.574	0.655	0.620	0.623	0.699	0.697		
WOM	0.713	0.525	0.640	0.852	0.510	0.758	0.488	

Caption: CI - Continuous Intention; CS - Customer Satisfaction; RI – Repurchase Intention; SE – Seamless Experience; WOM – Word of Mouth.

Source: Own elaboration

4.2.2. Hypotheses testing and discussion

The empirical model was tested using Smart PLS 4.0 software. To evaluate the structural model we use several criteria, namely: the variance explained (R^2) of each endogenous variables, the Stone-Geisser Q^2 , the sign, magnitude, and significance of the structural path coefficients. The structural model's explanatory power was evaluated through the explained variance (R^2). This allows us to measure the model's quality and determine how much the variance of the endogenous construct is explained by the model. According to Falk and Miller (1992) the explained variance (R^2) of each endogenous variable must be equal to or greater than 10%. The R^2 values for each endogenous variable are shown in Figure 2. The results show a minimum value of 27,5% for the construct word of mouth and a maximum value of 55,4% for the construct continuous intention.

The non-parametric bootstrapping technique (sampling with replacement) was employed to assess the significance of the structural coefficients and item loadings, using 5000 subsamples (Hair et al., 2017). The path coefficients values and their significance are shown in table XVI.

The results presented on Table XVI shows that 10 out of the eleven hypotheses proposed were supported.

Hypothesis H1), which proposes that the seamless experience positively influences customers' satisfaction, was supported with ($\beta = 0,491$; $p < 0,001$). These results are in line with previous studies (e.g., Asmare & Zewdie, 2022) that recognize the importance of seamless

experience to achieve customer satisfaction. Recent studies developed in the context of omnichannel also found a positive significant effect of seamless experience on customer satisfaction (e.g., Gao & Huan, 2024; Chang & Li, 2022). Lazaris et al. (2021) found that the effect of omnichannel integration on customer satisfaction and loyalty intentions is more stronger for consumers who perceive the channels as complementary and for consumers with a goal-directed shopping orientation

Hypothesis H2), which states that seamless experience has a positive effect on customers repurchase intention, was supported ($\beta = 0.25$; $p < 0.01$). This positive effect is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Chang & Li, 2022; Lemke et al., 2011; Singh & Pandey, 2024) although Pasaribu and Pasaribu (2021) found a non-significant effect. Hypothesis H3), postulate that seamless experience has a positive impact on word of mouth. This hypothesis was supported with ($\beta = 0.26$; $p < 0.05$). This finding corroborate recent studies that also found a positive effect of seamless experience on word of mouth (e.g., Chang & Li, 2022; Li & Chang, 2024; Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2023). A study developed by Akturan and Kuter (2024) in the context of fashion retailing found that two dimensions of the omnichannel experience, namely consistency and personalization, do not directly influence WOM, while connectivity has a positive direct effect. Hypothesis 4) proposes a positive effect of a seamless experience on customer trust in the retailer. This hypothesis was strongly supported ($\beta = 0.519$; $p < 0.001$), corroborating the findings of recent studies in the retail context (Bahri et al., 2023; Cheah et al., 2022) and other contexts (Tran Xuan et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024). The impact of physical store quality on customer satisfaction was not significant ($\beta = -0.045$; not significant), indicating that hypothesis H5) was not supported. This finding contradicts the proposed hypothesis and results obtained in recent studies developed in the omni-channel retailing (e.g., Zhang et al., 2022) and other contexts (e.g., Dialoka & Soebiantoro, 2024; Sulistiono et al., 2024).

However, it aligns with the findings of studies developed in the context of omnichannel (e.g., Lee et al., 2019; Melisa et al., 2024) who determined that physical store characteristics did not significantly influence customer satisfaction with the retailer.

Hypothesis H6) proposes that the virtual store quality has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. The findings show that this hypothesis was supported with ($\beta = 0.32$; $p < 0.01$). This result is consistent with the findings of several previous studies (Abrar et al., 2017; Seng & Mahmoud, 2020; Szymanski & Hise, 2000).

Hypothesis H7) states that customer satisfaction has a positive impact on trust in the retailer. This hypothesis was supported with ($\beta = 0,28$; $p < 0,01$). Studies developed in retail banking by (Román, 2003) and online purchases (Horppu et al., 2008; Kassim & Asiah Abdullah, 2010) align with the obtained results.

Hypothesis H8), which proposes that satisfaction positively influences word of mouth, was also support with ($\beta = 0,312$; $p < 0.01$). The positive effect of customer satisfaction on word of mouth has been supported in the retail sector (e.g., Ahmadinejad, 2019; Curtis et al., 2011) and other contexts such as retail banking (e.g., Khalaf Ahmad & Ali Al-Zu'bi, 2011; Suryani & Hendryadi, 2015).

Regarding hypothesis 9), which states that customer satisfaction has a positive relationship with repurchase intention, was strongly supported by ($\beta = 0,511$; $p < 0.001$). The findings align with previous research in multichannel context (Jung & Kim, 2022; Mustikasari et al., 2021;), as well as e-commerce (Lemke et al., 2011; Wen et al., 2011). A study developed by Tsai et al. (2016) in the context of online clothing retailers found similar results, highlighting that satisfaction is a critical determinant of repurchase intention.

The positive relationship between customer satisfaction and continuous intention postulated in hypothesis 10) was strongly supported with ($\beta = 0.602$; $p < 0.001$). This result is in line with the study developed by Chang and Li (2022) in the context of omnichannel shopping and Liang and Zhang (2012) in the context of grocery retail mobile applications.

Finally, the results show that hypothesis H11), which proposes that seamless experience has a positive impact on continuous intention was supported ($\beta = 0,191$; $p < 0,05$). This result corroborates the findings of Lemke et al. (2011), in the sense that the authors found a positive impact of seamless experience on continuous intention.

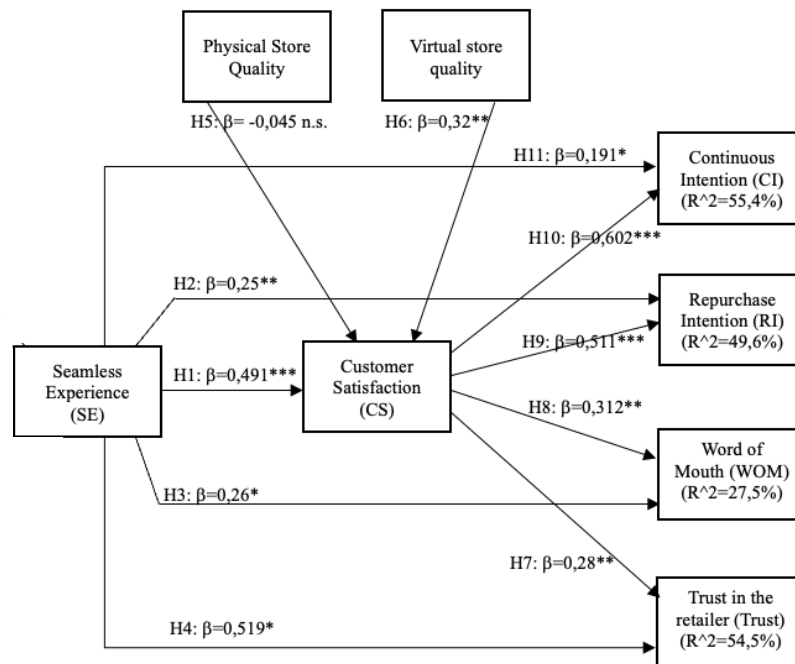
Table XVII - Estimated coefficients (β) and T-statistics for the tested hypothesis

Tested Hypothesis	β	<i>t-value</i>	Supported Hypothesis
H1) Seamless Experience -> Customer Satisfaction	0.491	5.643 ***	Yes
H2) Seamless Experience -> Repurchase Intention	0.25	2.616 **	Yes
H3) Seamless Experience -> Word of Mouth	0.26	2.576 *	Yes
H4) Seamless Experience -> Trust in the retailer	0.519	6.513***	Yes
H5) Physical Store Quality -> Customer Satisfaction	-0.045	0.608 n.s.	No
H6) Virtual Store Quality -> Customer Satisfaction	0.32	3.181 **	Yes
H7) Customer Satisfaction -> Trust in the retailer	0.28	3.045 **	Yes
H8) Customer Satisfaction -> Word of Mouth	0.312	2.788 **	Yes

H9) Customer Satisfaction -> Repurchase Intention	0.511	5.532 ***	Yes
H10) Customer Satisfaction -> Continuous Intention	0.602	7.708***	Yes
H11) Seamless Experience -> Continuous Intention	0.191	2.568 *	Yes

Symbols *, ** e *** indicate significance levels for $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$ e $p < 0.001$, respectively; n.s. indicates 'not significant'.

Source: Own elaboration



Symbols *, ** e *** indicate significance levels for $p < 0,05$, $p < 0,01$ e $p < 0,001$, respectively; n.s. indicates 'not significant'.

Figure 2 – Empirical Model

Source: Own elaboration

5. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

This study tested the proposed conceptual model, primarily aiming to analyse the degree to which seamless experience affects customer satisfaction and its subsequent effects on repurchase intentions, retailer word of mouth, trust, and continuous intention. The model additionally examined the impact of physical and virtual store quality on customer satisfaction.

The study revealed that seamless experience positively influences customer satisfaction as well as continuous intention, repurchase intention, word of mouth and trust in the retailer. The results of this study also indicate that satisfaction has a positive effect on these four variables previously mentioned.

As for physical store quality, it has a negative influence on customer satisfaction. However, virtual store quality has a direct positive effect on satisfaction.

The findings of this study significantly contribute to the management of seamless customer experience in omnichannel retail by confirming the existence of positive relationships between seamless experience and continuous intention, repurchase intention, word of mouth and trust. Considering that the influence of a seamless experience on continuous intention shows the most significant strength among the tested relationships, it is essential for retailers to invest in strategies that contribute to an integrated omnichannel experience, thereby enhancing customer-brand relationships and encouraging customers to stay engaged in their omnichannel shopping with the retailer rather than exploring alternatives.

The same thought applies to the correlation between seamless experience and trust in the retailer, as an integrated shopping experience builds customer confidence in the brand's ability to deliver smooth and consistent value across channels.

Furthermore, retailers must assure that consumers are provided of a cohesive and consistent omnichannel experience across all channels, since with higher levels of satisfaction, customers are more willing to shop continuously at the retailer.

5.1. Limitations

One of the main limitations of the study is that the sampling was by convenience, which prevents the generalisation of the results (Saunders et al., 2019). Additionally, the data was collected at a single point in time, preventing the development of causality without longitudinal data. Another limitation was the small sample size, as an increased number of questionnaire replies could lead to more accurate results.

5.2. Theoretical Contributions

The present study aims to contribute to the existing literature on omnichannel integration in the retail sector, at a time when consumers increasingly demand more seamless and integrated shopping experiences. It reinforces findings from previous studies (Chang & Li, 2022; Huré et al., 2017; Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2020) particularly in the context of how consistent and fluid transitions between channels influence key behavioural responses. By empirically validating the impact of a seamless experience on these behaviour outcomes, this research enriches the theoretical framework regarding customer expectations in a highly interconnected retail environment. Furthermore, it helps to gain a deeper awareness of how the quality of each touchpoint, including both physical and virtual channels, shapes the total consumer experience within an omnichannel context.

5.3. Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer actionable insights for retail managers seeking to enhance the customer experience across omnichannel environments. Technological advancements over the past three decades have significantly transformed the retail landscape, driving shifts in consumer behaviour and raising expectations for seamless, integrated interactions across multiple touchpoints (Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2020; Lazaris et al., 2015). Considering these changes, it becomes essential for retailers to continuously analyse and understand current customer behaviours to design strategies that align with their evolving needs and preferences. Key recommendations include improving real-time product information—such as availability, delivery options, and return conditions, these should be clearly visible and consistent across all channels. To address this, retail managers should invest in centralized inventory management systems and synchronize product data across all touchpoints. By implementing unified campaign planning processes and integrate promotional calendars and pricing systems across departments, managers can ensure a cohesive and predictable customer experience which in turn may improve satisfaction. Fostering internal awareness of the strategic importance of omnichannel synergy can enable teams to provide a more unified and gratifying customer experience. Furthermore, by continuously improving the functionality and appeal of digital platforms, retailers can increase customer satisfaction, which in turn positively influences behavioural responses towards the firm.

5.4. Future recommendations

Future research should investigate the effects of customer characteristics such as, price consciousness, time pressure and loyalty proneness (De Keyser et al., 2015; Konuş et al., 2008), as these factors can provide valuable insights for retailers. Similarly, exploring the moderating role of perceived channel complementarity and shopping orientation could further clarify how omnichannel integration shapes customer outcomes, as these factors can significantly influence the relationship between omnichannel integration, satisfaction, and loyalty intentions (Lazaris et al., 2021). Understanding these traits can help businesses identify where to strategically invest, as they significantly influence the relationship between omnichannel integration and the perceived seamlessness of the shopping journey. This knowledge could enable retailers to tailor their strategies to different customer profiles, enhancing satisfaction and loyalty across diverse segments. Additionally, applying the model to specific industries, such as fashion, electronics, or groceries, could offer a deeper understanding of how a seamless experience impacts consumer behaviour in distinct contexts.

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APPENDIX A - Measurement Scales

Seamless Experience

(AVE = 0,538; CR = 0,833; α = 0,927) Second order construct

(Scale: 1 – “Strongly disagree” to 7 – “Strongly agree”)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
	Consistency of Sales Strategy	0,815	19,221
	Information Visibility	0,844	33,627
	Simplicity of Payment	0,734	14,263
	Flexibility of Fulfillment	0,581	7,923
	Availability of links	0,740	16,719
	Convenience of Sharing	0.652	10,808

- Consistency of Sales Strategy**

(AVE = 0,628; CR = 0,853; α = 0,852)

Adapted from Chang & Li (2022); Cocco & Demoulin (2022) and Z. W. Y. Lee et al. (2019).

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
CSS1	The products prices offered by the retailer are consistent across the different touchpoints.	0,749	12,742
CSS2	The product promotion activities offered by the retailer are consistent across different touchpoints.	0,834	22,857
CSS3	The product categories offered by the retailer are consistent across different touchpoints.	0,781	16,009
CSS4	Product availability is the same in all channels.	*	*
CSS5	The quality of products is consistent across different channels.	*	*
CSS6	Online and physical stores have consistent performance in the speed of service delivery.	0,788	22,515
CSS7	The levels of customer service are consistent across the online and physical stores.	0,807	22,363

- **Information Visibility**

(AVE = 0,572; CR = 0,814; α = 0,812)

Adapted from Chang & Li, (2022) and Lee et al. (2019).

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
IV1	I can obtain information about the products through different online touchpoints.	0,702	9,818
IV2	I can keep track of my transaction records through different online touchpoints after making a transaction.	0,734	13,412
IV3	I can view the products (i.e., introduction of product usage, etc.) through different online touchpoints in retailer's physical store.	0,825	22,982
IV4	I can check inventory status across different channels.	*	*
IV5	Customer information (customer account) is connected to the different channels.	0,769	19,218
IV6	My interactions with customer service across different channels are interconnected.	0,747	17,114

- **Simplicity of Payment**

(AVE = 0,857; CR = 0,919; α = 0.917)

Adapted from Chang and Li (2022)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
PS1	The retailer provides quick payment method across different touchpoints.	0,928	48,689
PS2	The retailer provides convenient payment procedures across different touchpoints.	0,912	30,72
PS3	The retailer provides easy payment operations across different touchpoints.	0,938	54,291

- **Flexibility of Fulfillment**

(AVE = 0,793; CR = 0,873; α = 0,869)

Adapted from Chang & Li, (2022) and Shi et al. (2020).

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
FOF1	The retailer offers a “buy online and pick up in shop” service option.	0,905	29,778
FOF2	The retailer offers the service option ‘buy in-store and have it delivered to your home’.	*	*

FOF3	The retailer offers a ‘buy online and return/exchange in shop’ service option.	0,923	46,787
FOF4	You can try the products in a physical shop and order them online.	0,841	19,319

- **Availability of links**

(AVE = 0.922; CR = 0.958; α = 0.957)

Adapted from Chang and Li (2022)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
AOL1	The transition link between different online channels launches and runs right away.	0.952	79.428
AOL2	The transition link between different online channels is easy to use.	0,964	91,633
AOL3	The transition link between different online channels is accessible and load quickly.	0,964	100,382

- **Convenience of Sharing**

(AVE = 0,751; CR = 0,837; α = 0,833)

Adapted from Chang and Li (2022)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
COS1	I can share the products (and related information) I saw in the retailer’s physical store with others on social platforms conveniently.	0,902	45,57
COS2	In physical stores, I can share the products (and related information) with others on social platforms through mobile immediately.	0,886	39,664
COS3	I can easily search the products links in the retailer’s online store and communicate with others via its social media sharing function.	0,809	17,394

Customer Satisfaction

(AVE = 0,895; CR = 0,942; α = 0,941)

Adapted from Oliver (1980)

(Scale: 1 – “Strongly disagree” to 7 – “Strongly agree”)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
CS1	Overall, I am satisfied with omnichannel shopping journey.	0,956	95,813

CS2	Overall, I am happy that I experienced omnichannel shopping journey.	0,947	70,56
CS3	Overall, my choice to go omnichannel shopping journey has been a wise one.	0,936	49,028
CS4	Overall, I feel bad about my decision to go omnichannel shopping journey.	*	*

Continuous Intention

(AVE = 0,762; CR = 0,853; α = 0,845)
Adapted from Bhattacharjee (2001)

(Scale: 1 – “Strongly disagree” to 7 – “Strongly agree”)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
CI1	I intend to continue in omnichannel shopping at this retailer rather than discontinue.	0,889	37,623
CI2	My intentions are to continue omnichannel shopping at this retailer instead of using another alternative.	0,869	20,618
CI3	I will continue omnichannel shopping at this retailer with the same or greater regularity as I have done so far.	0,861	30,68
CI4	I'm thinking of stopping omnichannel shopping at this retailer.	*	*

Repurchase Intention

(AVE = 0,768; CR = 0,872; α = 0,849)
Adapted from Parasuraman et al. (1996)

(Scale: 1 – “Strongly disagree” to 7 – “Strongly agree”)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
RI1	I will consider this retailer as first choice to buy similar products.	0,798	20,312
RI2	I would buy products from this retailer again.	0,903	38,397
RI3	I intend to buy more products from this retailer in the future.	0,924	41,746

Word of Mouth

(AVE = 0,856; CR = 0,919; α = 0,916)
Adapted from Parasuraman et al. (1996)

(Scale: 1 – “Strongly disagree” to 7 – “Strongly agree”)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
WOM1	I say positive things about the retailer to others.	0,923	22,373
WOM2	I recommend the retailer to those who follow my advice.	0,949	73,97
WOM3	I encourage friends and relatives to buy from this retailer.	0,903	30,847

Trust in the retailer

(AVE = 0,806; CR = 0,886; α = 0,88)
Adapted from Rahman et al. (2022)

(Scale: 1 – “Strongly disagree” to 7 – “Strongly agree”)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
TRUST1	The Retailer reminds me of someone who is competent and knows what they are doing.	0,866	26,265
TRUST2	I can trust the retailer's name.	0,931	58,023
TRUST3	Information about the retailer's products and services is credible.	0,896	40,039
TRUST4	Over time, my experiences with the retailer have led me to expect it to fulfil its promises.	*	*

Physical Store Quality

(AVE = 0,611; CR = 0,916; α = 0,956) Second order construct
(Scale: 1 – “Strongly disagree” to 7 – “Strongly agree”)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
	Cleanliness	0,803	24,375
	Music	0,781	17,773
	Scent	0,821	24,689

	Temperature	0,782	21,526
	Lighting	0,857	43,208
	Colour	0,814	23,812
	Staff Helpfulness	0,581	6,974

- **Cleanliness**

(AVE = 0,732; CR = 0,882; α = 0,877)
Adapted from Behera et al. (2023)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
CLEANLINESS1	The cleanliness in the store is fine.	0,757	15,466
CLEANLINESS2	The floor's cleanliness of the store motivates me to buy more.	0,882	27,806
CLEANLINESS3	The store's clean racks and stacks motivate me to stay longer.	0,889	37,492
CLEANLINESS4	The cleanliness of the shop attracts me to visit again.	0,888	34,953

- **Music**

(AVE = 0,661; CR = 0,898; α = 0,897)
Adapted from Behera et al. (2023)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
MUSIC1	The music in the store is fine.	0,718	16,218
MUSIC2	Listening to music while shopping creates a relaxed atmosphere.	0,788	17,909
MUSIC3	The presence of background music improves my well-being and comfort.	0,837	26,921
MUSIC4	In-store music motivates me to shop more.	0,823	26,112
MUSIC5	The background music volume makes me remain longer.	0,838	27,899
MUSIC6	The music creates a pleasant atmosphere that makes me spend more time in the shop.	0,867	34,566

• Scent

(AVE = 0,775; CR = 0,9; α = 0,899)

Adapted from Behera et al. (2023)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
SCENT1	The scent in the store is fine.	0,727	15,134
SCENT2	The scent in the store encourages me to buy more.	0,916	53,012
SCENT3	The scent in the store keeps me coming back	0,926	49,115
SCENT4	The smell of the shop makes me stay longer.	0,934	58,485

• Temperature

(AVE = 0,823; CR = 0,9; α = 0,892)

Adapted from Behera et al. (2023)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
TEMPERATURE1	The temperature in the store is fine.	0,91	45,953
TEMPERATURE2	The quality of the shop's air conditioning makes my presence in the shop comfortable.	0,951	93,295
TEMPERATURE3	The fully air-conditioned shopping environment makes me feel comfortable.	0,859	20,359
TEMPERATURE4	Without air conditioning, the shop prevents me from shopping.	*	*

• Lighting

(AVE = 0,753; CR = 0,893; α = 0,889)

Adapted from Behera et al. (2023)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
LIGHTING1	The lighting in the store is fine.	*	*
LIGHTING2	The store lighting is is pleasing to the eye, which makes me stay longer.	0,865	34,116
LIGHTING3	A good lighting colour attracts me to the products.	0,914	50,006
LIGHTING4	The store lighting makes the products more visible and appealing to me.	0,893	29,484

LIGHTINGS5	It is essential to see the different lighting used within the store in each region	0,794	14,636
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• **Colour**

(AVE = 0,925; CR = 0,96; α = 0,959)

Adapted from Behera et al. (2023)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
COLOUR1	The store's colour is fine.	0,952	64,352
COLOUR2	In my opinion, the store's colour transmits a favourable image.	0,976	196,334
COLOUR3	The store's colour gives me a favourable perception.	0,957	69,694

• **Staff Helpfulness**

(AVE = 0,808; CR = 0,924; α = 0,919)

Adapted from Antwi et al. (2020)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
HELPFULNESS1	The staff were willing to help.	0,913	57,2
HELPFULNESS2	The staff were friendly and attentive.	0,948	70,364
HELPFULNESS3	The staff were efficient.	0,929	44,649
HELPFULNESS4	The staff communicate in a language I understand.	0,798	16,021

Virtual Store Quality

(AVE = 0,839; CR = 0,912; α = 0,94) Second order construct
Adapted from Barnes & Vidgen (2002)

(Scale: 1 – “Strongly disagree” to 7 – “Strongly agree”)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
	Usefulness	0,917	44,878
	Entertainment	0,915	46,293

• Usefulness

(AVE = 0,931; CR = 0,964; α = 0,963)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
INFO1	The information on the web store is pretty much what I need to carry out my task.	0,95	55,719
INFO2	The web store adequately meets my information needs.	0,979	185,773
INFO3	The information on the web store is effective.	0,966	122,801

• Entertainment

(AVE = 0,9; CR = 0,944; α = 0,944)

		<i>Loadings</i>	<i>T-value</i>
VISUAL1	The web store is visually pleasing.	0,95	56,006
VISUAL2	The web store displays visually pleasing design.	0,963	90,153
VISUAL3	The web store is visually appealing.	0,934	36,449

* These items were excluded during the scale purification process.