



The Impact of AI on Omnichannel Customer Experience Throughout the Retail Customer
Journey

Graduating Project

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Rennes, France.

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Glossary

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Technology that allows machines to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence. In retail, it is used to analyze data, personalize experiences, and automate processes.

Omnichannel: A strategy that integrates all brand channels to deliver a unified experience. It allows customers to move between channels without losing consistency.

Customer Experience (CX): The set of perceptions, emotions, and responses a customer has when interacting with a brand. It influences satisfaction, loyalty, and purchase decisions.

Chatbot: A tool that uses AI to communicate with users and answer questions in real time. It automates responses but may fall short when handling complex issues.

Customer Journey: The complete path a customer follows from discovering a brand to purchase and post-purchase. Including stages such as awareness, consideration, purchase, retention, and loyalty.

Touchpoint: Any interaction between the customer and the brand, whether online or in store.

Personalization: The use of data and technology to tailor recommendations, or experiences to each customer. It increases relevance and improves satisfaction through the journey.

Machine Learning (ML): A branch of AI where systems learn patterns from data. It helps predict behaviors, optimize campaigns, and enhance decision making.

Phygital: A blend of physical and digital experiences in retail. It aims to combine the best of both worlds to offer a seamless, interactive, and coherent customer experience.

Resumen

Este estudio examina cómo la integración de la Inteligencia Artificial (IA) influye en la Experiencia del Cliente Omnicanal (ECO) en el sector retail. Su objetivo es comprender mejor la intersección entre la IA y las estrategias omnicanal, explorando las creencias, experiencias y percepciones tanto de los consumidores como de los profesionales de la industria. En los últimos años, el retail se ha visto transformado por los constantes cambios en las expectativas de los clientes, los rápidos avances tecnológicos y la creciente demanda de experiencias de compra fluidas y personalizadas. La IA se ha convertido en una de las fuerzas más disruptivas de esta transformación, ofreciendo nuevas formas de mejorar la satisfacción del cliente y potenciar el desempeño de las marcas. Sin embargo, utilizar la IA de manera efectiva no se trata solo de adoptar nueva tecnología, sino de saber cómo integrarla en todos los puntos de contacto de una forma natural y valiosa para los clientes.

La investigación aborda la siguiente pregunta: ¿Cómo impacta la integración de la Inteligencia Artificial en la Experiencia del Cliente Omnicanal en el sector retail? Para responderla, se utilizó un enfoque cualitativo y exploratorio. Los datos primarios se obtuvieron a partir de entrevistas semiestructuradas a nueve participantes, entre ellos consumidores de la Generación Z de Colombia y Francia, y profesionales del marketing y de la gestión de la experiencia del cliente en empresas que ya implementan IA en un contexto omnicanal. Adicionalmente, se observaron en tiempo real a tres participantes más con el fin de captar sus comportamientos, reacciones e interacciones con servicios impulsados por IA a través de distintos canales de retail.

Los hallazgos muestran que la IA puede aportar beneficios claros a la Experiencia del Cliente Omnicanal, especialmente a través de la personalización dirigida, una toma de decisiones más rápida y una mayor eficiencia operativa. Los profesionales compartieron ejemplos del uso de la IA para el análisis de sentimientos, el seguimiento de tendencias y la optimización automatizada de campañas, mientras que los consumidores valoraron el ahorro de tiempo, las recomendaciones relevantes y experiencias visuales más atractivas. A pesar de estos beneficios, surgieron varios desafíos, como las regulaciones sobre privacidad de datos, las dificultades en la integración entre canales y el escepticismo frente a experiencias totalmente automatizadas. En todos los casos, la supervisión humana fue considerada clave para mantener la autenticidad y la conexión emocional con las marcas.

Esta investigación demuestra cómo la IA y las estrategias omnicanal pueden trabajar de manera conjunta. La IA debe apoyar (y no reemplazar) la interacción humana. Las marcas que logren combinar ambos elementos a lo largo del recorrido del cliente, manteniendo la personalización, la transparencia y la confianza como ejes centrales, podrán construir una mayor lealtad, compromiso y un crecimiento sostenible.

Palabras clave

Inteligencia Artificial, Experiencia del Cliente, Omnicanalidad, Retail.

Abstract

This study examines how Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration influences the Omnichannel Customer Experience (OCE) in the retail sector. It aims to better understand the intersection between AI and omnichannel strategies by exploring the beliefs, experiences, and perceptions of both consumers and industry professionals. Over the last few years, retail has been reshaped by constant changes on customer expectations, rapid technological advancements, and the growing demand for seamless and personalized shopping experiences. AI has become one of the most disruptive forces in this transformation, offering new ways to improve satisfaction and boost brand performance. However, using AI effectively is not just about adopting new technology, it's about knowing how to integrate it across all touchpoints in a way that feels natural and valuable for customers.

The research addresses the question: *How does the integration of Artificial Intelligence impact the OCE in the retail sector?* To answer this, a qualitative, exploratory approach was used. Primary data came from semi-structured interviews with nine participants, including Gen Z consumers from Colombia, France and professionals in marketing and customer experience management in companies already implementing AI in an omnichannel context. Additionally, three more participants were observed in real time to capture their behaviors, reactions, and interactions with AI-powered services across different retail channels.

Findings show that AI can bring clear benefits to the OCE, especially through targeted personalization, faster decision-making and improved operational efficiency. Professionals shared examples of using AI for sentiment analysis, trend tracking, and automated campaign optimization, while consumers appreciated the time saved, relevant recommendations, and more engaging visual experiences. Despite these benefits, several challenges emerged, such as data

privacy regulations, difficulties in cross channel integration and skepticism toward fully automated experiences. Across all cases, human oversight was seen as key to maintain authenticity and emotional connection with brands.

This research shows how AI and omnichannel strategies can work hand in hand. AI should support (not replace) human interaction. Brands that blend both throughout the customer journey, while keeping personalization, transparency, and trust at the core, will build stronger loyalty, engagement, and sustainable growth.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, Customer Experience, Omnichannel, Retail.

1. Introduction

Over the years, the customer experience has evolved due to the constant and rapid changes in the market, especially in the retail sector. Nowadays, customers expect to have a seamless, fluent and consistent shopping experience that goes beyond a simple transaction. Thus, as new needs, trends and technological advances continue to emerge, brands are increasingly required to adapt quickly and come up with innovative ideas to stand out and remain competitive in the market.

One of the most disruptive aspects of this transformation is Artificial Intelligence (AI). From recommendation engines and chatbots to personalized marketing and predictive analytics, AI has the potential to reshape the retail experience as we know it, it offers a lot of opportunities to improve customer satisfaction and brand performance. However, while it represents an advantage, it's also a challenge for companies since it has absolutely changed the game. Now, companies must rethink and adapt their operations to ensure that AI is integrated across all touchpoints in a way that feels natural and valuable to customers (Hoyer et al., 2020).

That's where the idea of omnichannel comes in. This concept has become crucial in delivering a unified and personalized experience across all touchpoints of the customer journey, whether its online or offline, brand must effectively integrate all their channels to ensure a consistent experience (Hoyer et al., 2020). Although previous studies have analyzed AI and omnichannel strategies separately, there is still limited research addressing how the integration of AI specifically impacts the omnichannel customer experience (OCE), and this intersection is precisely where this research finds its purpose.

Therefore, the central research question guiding this study is, how does the integration of AI impact the OCE in the retail sector? By answering this question, the study aims to contribute

to the existing literature on customer experience management, while also offering practical insights for brands seeking to meet evolving customer expectations.

Finally, the project is structured with a literature review at the beginning, which explores AI, customer experience, the retail market, and the customer journey. The following chapter details the methodology adopted for this research, including real-time customer experience observations and semi-structured interviews with professionals and customers. After that, the results are presented and analyzed, followed by a discussion connecting the findings with existing literature. The study then provides partial implications and conclusions based on the three empirical perspectives, before moving to the general conclusion, and as a final point, the last section outlines the limitations of the research and suggests directions for future studies.

2. Literature Review

The omnichannel retailing landscape is evolving rapidly, driven in part by advancements in AI. Therefore, making a comprehensive literature review is essential to explore the gaps and emerging challenges related to the consumer experience. The following literature review explores current knowledge and theories in research related to the integration of AI in the customer journey within omnichannel retail strategies. It also covers key concepts such as types of artificial intelligence, customer experience, the phases of the customer journey, touchpoints, among others.

2.1 Artificial Intelligence (AI)

To begin with, Artificial intelligence is a branch of computer science focused on developing systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence (Glover, 2025). In the marketing landscape, AI has transformed how businesses understand consumer behavior, how they personalize communications and optimize campaigns across different channels. These intelligent systems analyze huge amounts of customer data to identify patterns, predict trends, deliver targeted messaging, and much more. On the whole, it allows marketers and professionals to take advantage of it, coming up with new ideas and creating more relevant experiences throughout the customer journey.

The transformative impact of AI on marketing continues to expand, creating both significant opportunities and strategic considerations. McCarthy (2007) defined AI as: “the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs, it is related to the similar task of using computers to understand human intelligence.” This concept has been materialized through AI-powered tools that now drive and support customer segmentation, content optimization, real-time bidding, conversational interfaces, and predictive analytics, radically transforming how brands connect with their audiences while also raising important questions about privacy, algorithmic transparency, and the evolving relationship between human creativity and machine efficiency.

2.1.1 Types of artificial intelligence

Digital transformation has driven and almost forced companies in the retail sector to adopt solutions using AI to improve the customer experience. In an omnichannel environment,

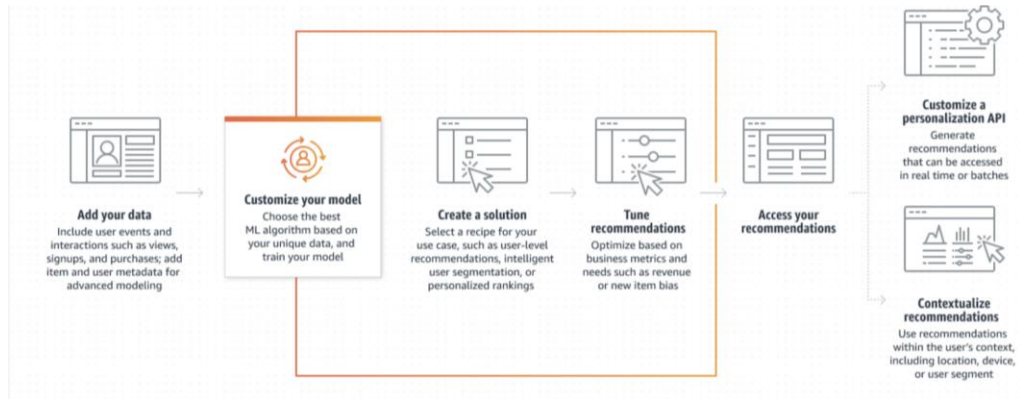
where consumers interact with brands through multiple touchpoints (physical stores, websites, mobile apps, social media, etc.), AI enables endless possibilities and improvements, offering more personalized and consistent experiences. Below, we discuss the main types of AI used in this context and their specific applications, illustrated with examples from various brands.

2.1.1.1 Machine Learning (ML).

First, we have machine learning (ML), which is a branch of artificial intelligence that allows systems to learn from data, identify patterns, and make decisions without necessarily being programmed. In the retail environment, ML is used to analyze data such as purchase history, browsing behavior, visit frequency, and other customer data in order to offer personalized product recommendations, predict consumer trends, and optimize inventory management (Amazon Web Services, 2026).

Amazon Personalize is an example of this, as it is a platform that allows companies to offer recommendations like those used by Amazon, improving conversion and customer loyalty. Thanks to ML, brands can adapt their content, prices, and promotions in real time to the individual preferences of each consumer, resulting in a more relevant and seamless shopping experience across all channels.

Amazon Personalize allows developers to quickly create and deploy curated recommendations and intelligent user segmentation at scale using machine learning (ML). Since Amazon Personalize can adapt to your individual needs, it can deliver the right customer experience at the right time and place. (Amazon Web Services, 2026)

Figure 1*Amazon Personalize Functionality*

Note. End-to-end workflow of Amazon Personalize. Taken from *Amazon Personalize functionality*, by AWS, 2026. (<https://aws.amazon.com/es/personalize/features/>).

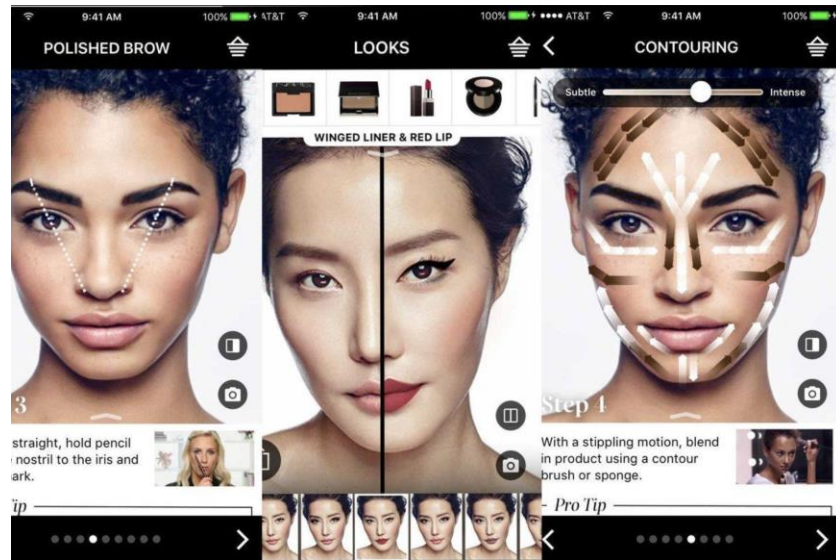
2.1.1.2 Deep learning (ML).

Deep learning is a subcategory of ML that uses deep neural networks to process large amounts of unstructured data, such as images, audio, or text. This technology is essential for developing more complex and intuitive systems, such as visual assistants, facial recognition, or real-time emotion analysis.

A notable example is Sephora, which developed its Virtual Artist tool based on deep learning and augmented reality. This allows users to virtually try out different makeup products from their mobile phones or on interactive screens in stores, integrating the physical and digital channels in an innovative way (Lorca, 2018). This technology not only improves the customer experience, but also increases the conversion rate and reduces returns.

Figure 2

Sephora augmented reality personalization illustration



Note. The virtual artist. Taken from Lorca, 2018
 (<https://d3.harvard.edu/platform-rctom/submission/sephora-developments-in-machine-learning-and-augmented-reality-towards-customer-personalization/>).

2.1.1.3 Natural Language Processing (NLP).

Natural Language Processing (NLP) is a technology that enables machines to understand, interpret, and generate human language by combining computational linguistics and rule-based models of language with statistical methods, machine learning, and deep learning techniques (Stryker & Holdsworth, n.d.).

In retail, NLP is used in multiple ways to optimize and personalize the customer experience. For example, it is employed to automate and enhance interactions between brands and consumers through tools like chatbots and virtual assistants, which offers a lot of features such as, answer questions about products, their usages, resolve issues, offer recommendations

24/7, in real time, and advise customers to reduce uncertainty. Other solutions offered by these AI-enabled services include providing recommendations for additional consumption, offering feedback, and simplifying the consumer experience by facilitating problem detection or offering recommendations for optimized use (Hoyer et al., 2020).

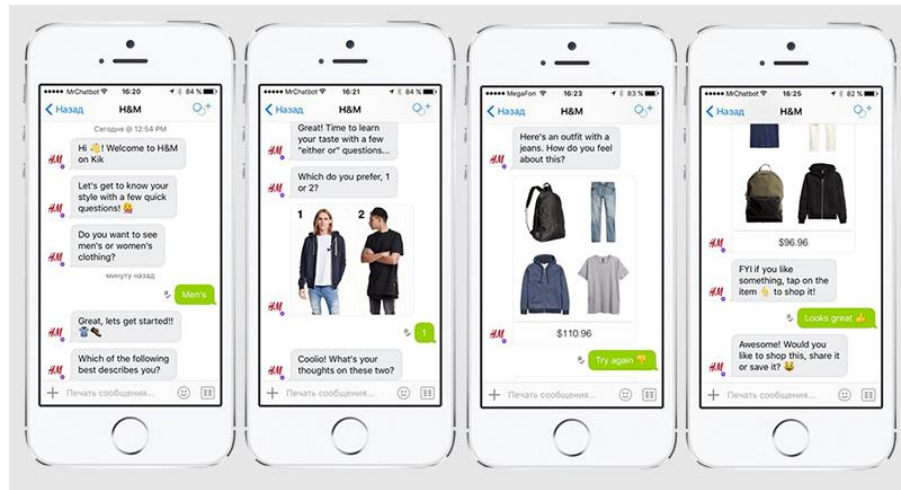
Additionally, intelligent search engines use NLP to better understand user queries and deliver more accurate and relevant results. Another important application is sentiment analysis, we can see it mostly on social media and reviews, where companies gather customers' opinions and emotions regarding their products and services, which then help them to identify areas for improvement and possible emerging trends (Hoyer et al., 2020).

A brand that did well integrating this type of IA is H&M, the brand has implemented intelligent chatbots on platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and its own mobile app, capable of holding conversations with users, suggesting personalized looks, and guiding them through the purchasing process. These systems, powered by NLP models, improve customer service efficiency, reduce waiting times, and enable continuous service (Stryker & Holdsworth, n.d.).

Additionally, analyzing the texts generated by users helps to understand their emotions and adapt marketing strategies in a more relatable and empathetic way.

Figure 3

Your personal stylist in your pocket



Note. H&M Chatbot Guide. Taken from *Les chatbots, nouvel espace de travail de luxe*, Designdo, 2018. (<https://www.designdo.fr/blog/les-chatbots-nouvel-espace-de-travail-de-lux/>).

2.1.1.4 Computer Vision.

Let's now look at computer vision, it allows machines to process and understand visual content. This technology has gained relevance in physical retail, as it allows, for example, mapping customer movements within the store, when a customer enters, how long they spend observing a product, or how much time they stay in the store. It can also analyze facial expressions, allowing the possibility to infer somehow the customer's mood, it automates inventory control as well, and facilitate new ways of interacting with products.

Zara has introduced this type of technology within their stores, we are talking about smart mirrors, which are equipped with RFID sensors and cameras that automatically identify the garments that customers are carrying with them in the fitting room and recommend outfits combinations or complementary items that makes you look outstanding, enabling customers to

optimize time and see what a complete outfit will look like in the mirror. This integration between physical space and digital experience enriches the customer journey and reinforces the brand's omnichannel strategy (Abdullah, 2025).

This technology is also similar to the smart mirror from Oak Labs, which allows customers to verify if their size is available in-store, let them view different color options, and explore additional suggestions based on what they brought into the changing room.

In the regular cashier desks, we can see something similar, you don't have to wait anymore for someone who helps you to scan your garments and buy them, you can do a self-checkout now by only leaving the garments inside an area with a system that automatically identifies garments with its corresponding price. To complete the transaction and generate the receipt, customers simply confirm their items on the screen and then chose which payment method they prefer, if paying via card or mobile phone. Pablo Isla, chairman and CEO of Zara's parent company Inditex, said "Our business model combines stores and digital seamlessly, and we are ready for the opportunities that this brings with current and new customers" (Clarke, 2018).

Figure 4

Zara Smart Mirrors



Note. Zara's new in-store robots [Photograph]. From *How Zara's new in-store robots are changing the way we shop*, by C. Teather, May 18, 2018, *Glamour UK*. (<https://www.glamourmagazine.co.uk/gallery/zara-stratford-westfield-tech-innovation>).

Figure 5

Zara Self-checkout



Note. Zara's new in-store robots [Photograph]. From *How Zara's new in-store robots are changing the way we shop*, by C. Teather, May 18, 2018, *Glamour UK*. (<https://www.glamourmagazine.co.uk/gallery/zara-stratford-westfield-tech-innovation>).

Other brands such as Stradivarius, Pull&Bear and Uniqlo are also doing the same as Zara, they're incorporating smart technologies into their stores. For example, Stradivarius has introduced self-checkout systems and interactive digital screens that enhance the in-store experience. Uniqlo uses interactive fitting rooms and app integration to suggest items based on customer preferences. All these innovations are what today's market is demanding, as they contribute to a more seamless and personalized omnichannel customer experience by connecting

physical and digital touchpoints, improving convenience, and reinforcing brand loyalty through the effective use of AI and smarter tech-driven interactions.

2.1.1.5 Generative Artificial Intelligence.

Generative AI is one of the most recent and innovative technologies. It is based on models capable of generating original content, such as text, images, music, or videos, from existing data. In the retail context, this AI facilitates almost everything, allowing the creation of product descriptions, content for marketing campaigns, personalized promotional images, and customized virtual experiences.

Nike, for example, has strategically used and integrated generative artificial intelligence to transform the way its products are created and promoted, which at the end will finally improve the customer experience. They achieve this by using data collected from its ecosystem of applications, its business systems, and its supply chain. Based on this, the brand has been able to improve the way it reaches its audience, offering customized shopping experiences and product recommendations. This data-driven approach, made possible by technologies such as machine learning and AI algorithms, has been reinforced by acquisitions such as Datalogue, which enables Nike to transform raw consumer data into real-time insights at scale (Mathews, 2026).

More recently, Nike has developed its own generative AI model, trained with exclusive data on athlete performance, which allows the brand to create products in collaboration with top athletes, resulting in projects such as A.I.R which means Athlete Imagined Revolution. In this initiative, athlete's preferences were converted into hundreds of design prototypes using generative AI, which were then refined using 3D printing and computational design, gradually accelerating the product development cycle from weeks to just a few hours. This has allowed

Nike to position itself even better in the market and offer increasingly personalized and emotionally resonant experiences that reinforce consumer engagement across all channels (Mathews, 2026).

Figure 6

Generative AI for Product Design & Athlete Imagined Revolution (A.I.R.) Project

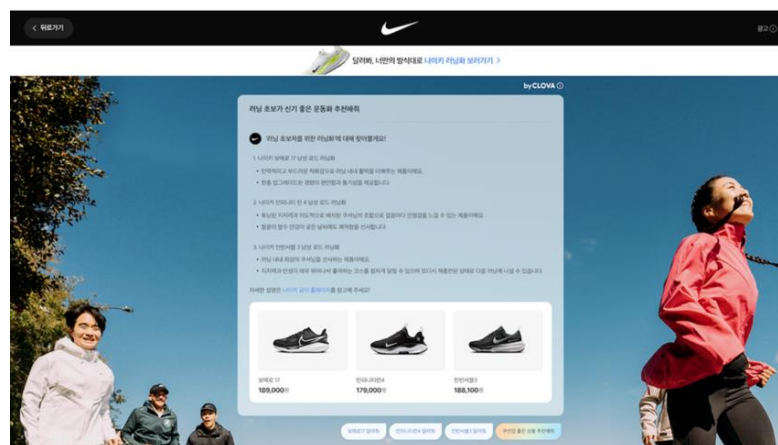


Note. AI & 3D-printed Nike sneaker designs. Taken from *Nike AI model John Hoke*, by N. Barker, 2024. (<https://aimmediahouse.com/market-industry/how-nike-is-using-ai-to-transform-product-design-customer-experience-and-operational-efficiency>).

In addition, Nike has expanded the use of generative AI to its advertising efforts, as seen in this campaign in South Korea using the HyperCLOVA X platform. Acting as a virtual brand advisor, the AI provided personalized recommendations and guided consumers through the purchasing process, resulting in higher user engagement and increased purchase intent. Besides, during pilot operations, the ad achieved a 20% higher click-through rate compared to traditional banner ads (Mathews, 2026).

Figure 7

Nike's Advertising campaign in South Korea



Note. AI & 3D-printed Nike sneaker designs. Taken from Nike AI model John Hoke, by N. Barker, 2024. (<https://aimmediahouse.com/market-industry/how-nike-is-using-ai-to-transform-product-design-customer-experience-and-operational-efficiency>).

In overall, these innovations exemplify how generative AI can enhance brand differentiation and deliver more seamless and emotionally meaningful interactions throughout the omnichannel customer journey.

2.2 Customer Experience (UX)

Customer Experience refers to all interactions a customer has with a brand across multiple touchpoints throughout their relationship lifecycle. As Meyer & Schwager (2007) notes: "Customer experience is the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company." This multidimensional concept involves cognitive, emotional, sensory, social, and behavioral responses, forming the foundation of customer perception and loyalty in today's competitive market.

According to McKinsey & Company (2022): "CX, or customer experience, encapsulates everything a business or an organization does to put customers first, managing their journeys and

serving their needs." This comprehensive approach integrates multiple disciplines including service design, user experience, marketing, and operations to create holistic experiences that resonate on both rational and emotional levels. As digital transformation accelerates, organizations are leveraging advanced analytics, artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies to deliver increasingly personalized, contextual, and frictionless experiences.

A brief summary of important definitions created by Jain et al. (2017) is presented in the following figure:

Figure 8*Important definitions of experiences/customer experiences*

Scholars	Definition	Orientation/ focus
Holbrook and Hirschman (1982, p. 132)	"Experiential perspective is phenomenological in spirit and regards consumption as a primarily subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic, responses, and esthetic criteria and consumption experience is a phenomenon directed toward the pursuit of fantasies, feelings, and fun"	Process/ phenomenon
Carbone and Haeckel (1994, p. 18)	"Customer experience is the aggregate and cumulative customer perception created during learning about, acquiring, using, maintaining and disposing of a product or service"	Customer response
Pine and Gilmore (1998, pp. 97-99)	"Experiences are a distinct offering, as different from services as services are from goods [...] an experience is not an amorphous construct; it is as real an offering as any service, good or commodity [...] they are inherently personal, existing only in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level"	Offering/value
Schmitt (1999, p. 57)	"Experience occurs as a result of encountering, undergoing or living through things. Experience provides sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational values that replace functional values"	Offering/value
Shaw and Ivens (2002, p. 6)	"A customer experience is an interaction between an organization and a customer. It is a blend of an organization's physical performance, the senses stimulated and emotions evoked, each intuitively measured against customer expectations across all moments of contact"	Process
Poulsen and Kale (2004, pp. 270-271)	"An engaging act of co-creation between a provider and a consumer wherein the consumer perceives value in the encounter and in the subsequent memory of that encounter [...] consumption phase itself is the main product"	Offering/value
Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b, p. 16)	"The co-creation of value through personalized interactions that are meaningful and sensitive to a specific consumer"	Offering/value
Gentile <i>et al.</i> (2007, p. 397)	"The customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical and spiritual). Its evaluation depends on the comparison between a customer's expectations and the stimuli coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence of the different moments of contacts or touchpoints"	Customer response
Meyer and Schwager (2007, p. 118)	"Customer experience is the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company. Direct contact generally occurs in the course of purchase, use, and service, and is usually initiated by the customer. Indirect contact most often involves unplanned encounters with the representation of a company's products, services, or brands and takes the form of word-of-mouth recommendations or criticisms, advertising, news reports, reviews, and so forth"	Customer response
Grundey (2008, p. 138)	"Subjective episode in the construction/transformation of the individual, with however, an emphasis on the emotions and senses lived during the immersion at the expense of the cognitive dimension"	Process
Verhoef <i>et al.</i> (2009, p. 32)	"Customer experience construct is holistic in nature and involves the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailers [...] this experience is created not only by those elements which the retailer can control	Customer response
<i>(continued)</i>		
Scholars	Definition	Orientation/ focus
Tynan and McKechnie (2009, p. 508)	(e.g. service interface, retail atmosphere, assortment, price), but also by elements that are outside of the retailer's control (e.g. influence of others, purpose of shopping) [...] encompasses the total experience, including the search, purchase, consumption, and after-sale phases of the experience"	Process
Palmer (2010, p. 199)	"Consuming an experience can be viewed as a process that takes place across stages including pre-consumption, the purchase and core experiences, to the remembered consumption experience (Arnold <i>et al.</i> , 2005). The value created is both enabled and judged by customers throughout this consumption process and not merely at the point of exchange"	Process
Johnston and Kong (2011, p. 8)	"Customer experience construct as an integrated framework "beginning with stimuli (tangible and product quality; brand relationships; interpersonal relationships), mediated by sequencing of the stimuli and the emotional predisposition of the individual, leading to the development of an attitude that is most likely to influence behaviour"	Customer response
Lemke <i>et al.</i> (2011, p. 848)	"Customer's experience is their personal interpretation of the service process and their interaction and involvement with it during their journey or flow through a series of touchpoints, and how those things make the customers feel"	Customer response
	"The customer's subjective response to the holistic direct and indirect encounter with the firm, including but not necessarily limited to the communication encounter, the service encounter and the consumption encounter"	Customer response

Note. Main interpretations of customer experience based on the study Customer experience – a review and research agenda, by R. Jain *et al.*, 2017, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 51(1).

These definitions were summarized from a review of 69 full-text articles, 12 books, and one published dissertation, all related to customer experience. This allowed us to arrive at the main definition proposed by Jain *et al.* (2017):

Customer experience is the aggregate of feelings, perceptions and attitudes formed during the entire process of decision making and consumption chain involving an integrated series of interaction with people, objects, processes and environment, leading to cognitive, emotional, sensorial and behavioral responses.

Now, customer experience is not just about satisfaction, it goes beyond that. Gao et al. (2021) expresses that “the customer experience refers to customers’ internal subjective responses to interactions with a company’s multiple touchpoints and channels”. It’s a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that can be analyzed from different perspectives. Bernd Schmitt (1999) argues that focusing solely on the functional features of products is no longer enough, companies need to create complete experiences that truly connect with customers. As he explains: “the ultimate goal of experiential marketing is to create holistic experiences that integrate individual experiences into a holistic Gestalt,” suggesting that the total experience should be more than just the sum of its parts.

Schmitt (1999) proposes a model that divides customer experience into five key areas, known as Strategic Experiential Modules (SEMs). These include the sensory (Sense), emotional (Feel), cognitive (Think), physical (Act) and social (Relate) dimensions. Instead of treating these elements separately, Schmitt suggests that brands can engage all of them simultaneously to create richer and more memorable experiences. This means a company can appeal to the customer’s senses, evoke emotions, stimulate their thinking, involve physical actions, and foster social connections, all at once.

This information is especially relevant to study how artificial intelligence is transforming the customer experience in omnichannel retail. First, AI has the ability to process massive amounts of data in real time, making it possible to personalize each of these five types of

experiences at scale, something that, back in 1999, was more of a theoretical aspiration. For example, AI can tailor what a customer sees on a screen (sensory experience), analyze their emotions through digital behavior (emotional experience), offer smart recommendations that encourage thinking (cognitive experience), guide them through a physical store using an app (physical experience), and connect them with other similar customers (social experience) (Schmitt, 1999).

Moreover, today's omnichannel retail requires these experiences to be consistent across all touchpoints, physical stores, websites, mobile apps, and more, and AI is precisely the tool that can orchestrate that consistency.

2.3 Omnichannel Customer Experience (OCE)

Lemon & Verhoef (2016) defined omnichannel as “the synergetic management of the numerous available channels and consumer touchpoints, in such a way that the customer experience across channels and the performance over the channels is optimized”. Hence, Omnichannel Customer Experience is when the customer can switch seamlessly between the different channels a company operates on, creating a unified and consistent experience regardless of the touchpoint the customer is (Twilio, 2023). This approach recognizes that consumers nowadays use multiple channels —both physical and digital— when interacting with the brands and seeks to delete barriers or any inconsistency between these channels.

This concept goes beyond simple multichannel presence, as it implies a deep integration of systems and data that allows companies to recognize the same customer across different touchpoints and personalize their interactions accordingly. Successful implementation of OCE

requires robust technological infrastructure, customer-centric strategies, and an organizational vision that prioritizes consistency of experience above traditional departmental divisions.

According to Calvo, Franco and Frassetto (2023), omnichannel consists of five dimensions, here there's a table illustrating each dimension with its definition and example:

Figure 9

Definition of Omnichannel Experience dimensions

Dimensions	Definition	Example
Connectivity	The extent to which the omnichannel service content and information are linked and interconnected	When a customer is browsing a product on a mobile device, a nearby physical store is recommended for him/her
Integration	The extent to which customer perceives all information systems and management operations are unified and integrated well across channels	The launch of new products is synchronized across different channels
Consistency	The extent to which customers experience both content and process consistency of interactions across channels	The price and sales information of products is consistent across all channels
Flexibility	The extent to which customers are provided with flexible options and experience continuity when migrating tasks from one channel to another channel	A customer can purchase the product online and receive the after-sales service in a physical store
Personalization	The extent to which a customer perceives that the omnichannel retailer provides its customers with individualized attention	The salesperson can offer a personalized recommendation based on a customer's online purchase history

Note. Main dimensions of the omnichannel experience. Taken from *The role of artificial intelligence in improving the omnichannel customer experience*, by Calvo, A. V., Franco, A. D., and Frassetto, M. (2023), *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 51(9/10). (<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-12-2022-0493>).

The five dimensions presented in the table —connectivity, integration, consistency, flexibility, and personalization— serve as foundational pillars for building an effective OCE. These dimensions not only show the technical and operational aspects of omnichannel strategies but also emphasize the importance of customer centricity. For instance, connectivity and integration enable seamless transitions between channels, while consistency ensures that customers receive uniform information and services regardless of the touchpoint. Together, these elements contribute to a coherent and satisfying customer journey (Calvo, Franco & Frassetto, 2023).

Moreover, the dimensions are highly complementary and interdependent. Effective integration and connectivity support consistency, while flexibility and personalization are key to adapt the experience to individual customer needs. The practical examples included in the table illustrate how these dimensions can be implemented in the real world.

On the other hand, Gao et al. (2021) also talk about OCE, they state that this term has evolved from the multichannel strategy, now, the omnichannel strategy is a new retailing approach, defined as “the synergetic management of the numerous available channels and customer touchpoints, in such a way that the customer experience across channels and the performance over channels is optimized”.

2.4 Retail Market

The retail market involves all activities related to the sale of goods and services directly to end consumers. This sector ranges from large chains of physical stores to small businesses and e-commerce platforms, representing one of the fundamental pillars of the global economy. The retail market functions as the final link in the distribution chain, connecting producers and manufacturers with end consumers, and transforming the value of products through the creation of time, place, possession, and form utilities (Zhan, 2024).

Currently, the retail landscape is experiencing a radical transformation driven by new technology, digitalization, changes in shopping behaviors, and consumer expectations. The boundaries between physical and digital commerce are barely noticeable, more and more, companies are adapting strategies that makes the shopping experience feels seamless and more fluent across different channels, giving rise to concepts such as "click and collect" and others that also integrate immersive experiences with the digital aspect. This evolution is redefining the

nature of retail and the way in which it performs, now, it must focus not only on doing and completing transactions, but also on creating memorable experiences (Zhan, 2024).

In addition to this, Kotler & Keller (2022) emphasize that the retail market is increasingly influenced by experiential marketing, where the goal is to engage consumers emotionally and sensorially. Retailers are no longer just places to purchase products, they are becoming environments where brands can make much more than only a transaction, they tell stories, establish relationships, and build loyalty. This aligns with the trend toward “phygital” retail, an approach that seamlessly integrates physical and digital environments to create coherent, personalized, and engaging shopping experiences for consumers. The term “phygital” as we might guess, comes from the combination of the words “physical” and “digital.” It reflects how brands are evolving to meet the expectations of customers that nowadays are more connected, informed, and demanding (Kotler & Keller, 2022).

Although it may be confused with omnichannel, phygital is merely a tool within a broader omnichannel strategy. This aims to ensure that physical touchpoints, such as stores, stands, or pop-ups are complemented by digital tools like apps, augmented reality, artificial intelligence, or e-commerce platforms. This enables customers to interact with the brand in an omnichannel, frictionless way. The goal is not to replace physical experiences with digital ones, but rather to combine the best of both worlds to optimize the customer journey and strengthen brand engagement.

For example, a store may use digital technologies to provide real-time personalized recommendations, contactless payment options or allow customers to scan a product in-store to see online reviews or check availability at other stores.

Moreover, considering other authors opinions, Grewal et al. (2017) argue that successful retailers are those who integrate omnichannel strategies with advanced data analytics to personalize experiences and predict customer behavior. They highlight that today's retail success depends heavily on agility, real-time decision-making, and the ability to deliver value across all channels, not just in price, but also in convenience, personalization, and emotional engagement.

On the other hand, Lemon & Verhoef (2016) explain that the transition toward an omnichannel environment has redefined the customer journey, requiring retailers to adopt new technologies like mobile apps, AI-driven recommendations, and smart in-store experiences. These tools enhance the ability to track, analyze, and improve consumer touchpoints, resulting in more cohesive and impactful brand interactions.

2.5 Customer Journey

"The customer journey is a holistic approach that maps the entire customer experience, revealing critical touchpoints and emotional states that drive customer decision-making and loyalty" (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Following this, the customer journey describes the complete sequence of interactions and experiences a customer has with a brand, from the first contact to pre-purchase stages (including also post-purchase behaviors such as loyalty and advocacy). This concept involves the relationship between the customer and the company as a journey with multiple stages and touchpoints, each with the potential to influence consumer perception, decisions, and behavior.

Analyze the customer journey allows organizations to identify critical moments or "moments of truth" where the customer experience can be improved.

Companies that map and optimize these journeys are often better positioned in the market, as this allows them to understand their customers and meet their needs at every stage, from initial discovery and consideration to purchase, product or service use, and post-purchase support. In this way, they foster lasting relationships based on positive and consistent experiences throughout the entire journey.

Continuing with the theoretical foundation of the Customer Journey, Lemon and Verhoef's model offers a comprehensive framework that let us understand the customer experience across all stages of the journey. The authors states that this experience is neither static nor linear, but dynamic, multifaceted, and strongly influenced by multiple interactions across three key stages, pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase. They also emphasize that these interactions can be classified into cognitive, emotional, sensory, and relational dimensions, all essential to influence consumer behavior and build lasting brand relationships. These stages and types of interactions will be developed below.

2.5.1 Purchase Phases Along the Customer Journey

In the pre-purchase stage, the customer becomes aware of a need or desire and begins searching for potential solutions. At this point, customer expectations are shaped by prior experiences, brand perceptions, advertising, recommendations, and digital content. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) highlight the importance of managing this stage carefully, as it lays the foundation for the customer's initial perception of the brand. External stimuli, such as reviews, social media content, or brand visibility, play an important role, as they influence and can even generate purchase intent and consideration among customers toward a product or service. This is

where effective omnichannel marketing strategies can successfully guide consumers from discovery to active evaluation (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

The purchase stage involves the customer's direct interaction with the company to acquire the product or service. This stage includes both the decision-making process and the act of purchasing. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) emphasize that elements such as site or store navigation, clarity of offers, point-of-sale design (physical or digital), and customer service are critical in crafting the purchase experience. Any friction, such as complicated forms, delays in response, or lack of personalization, can negatively impact the final decision. Managing this stage efficiently is crucial to ensure conversion and satisfaction.

The post-purchase phase plays a vital role in determining customer satisfaction, retention, and loyalty. This stage involves aspects such as product quality, customer support, post-purchase communications, examples of this could be gratitude emails, surveys, personalized offers or issue resolution. According to the authors, this phase is crucial for strengthening the customer relationship and encouraging behaviors such as repeat purchases and advocacy. The importance of accurately managing this phase lies in the fact that a positive post-purchase experience often transforms customers into brand promoters, while a negative one can have amplified repercussions through digital WOM.

2.5.2 Types of Interactions in the Customer Journey

Moving forward, let's talk about the types of interactions that a customer can have, the first one is cognitive interactions, which play an important role in the journey, as it involves rational processing of information. These include evaluating product attributes, comparing prices, analyzing benefits, and understanding promotional messages. Lemon and Verhoef (2016)

argue that cognitive interactions are essential during the pre-purchase and purchase stages, where customers seek logical justifications for their decisions. However, information overload or lack of clarity may overwhelm consumers and impact their perception of the brand.

On the other hand, we've emotional interactions, which refers to the feelings a brand evokes in the customer. These may be positive, generating emotions such as trust, happiness, excitement, belonging... or negative ones, such as frustration, sadness or distrust. The authors explain that emotions powerfully influence customer memory and loyalty, the, a positive emotional experience at any point in the journey can create a deeper connection than one based solely on functional benefits.

Another type is sensory interactions, which relate to the physical stimuli perceived by customers through their senses, such as visual design, sounds, textures, or scents. These are especially relevant in physical environments like stores but also apply to digital platforms through intuitive and aesthetically pleasing interfaces. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) state that sensory experiences enrich overall brand perception and can help differentiate a company in saturated markets.

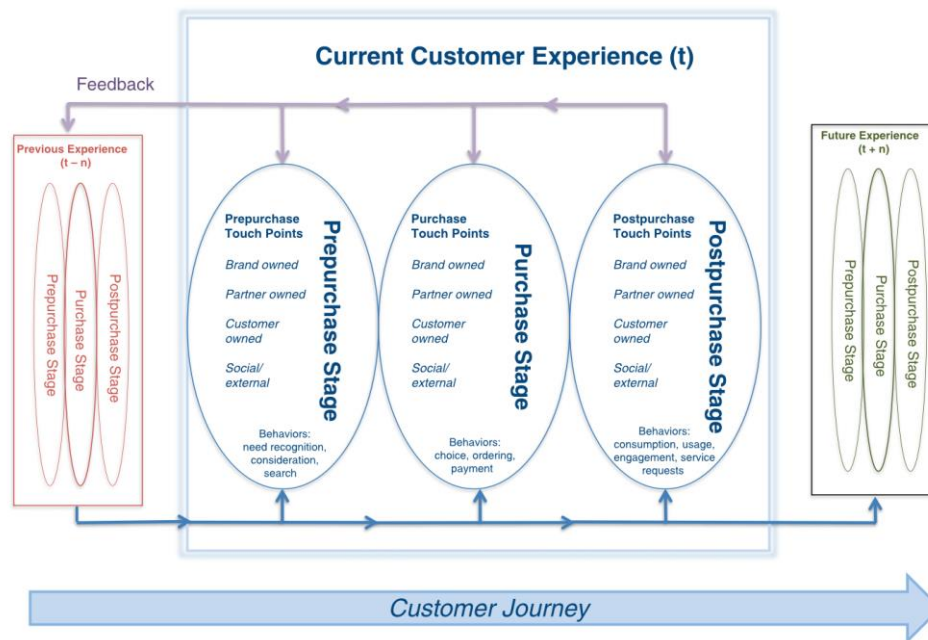
Last but not least, we've relational interactions, that focus on interpersonal connections and the customer's perception of their relationship with the brand. This includes personalized service, staff empathy, ongoing communication, and responsiveness. According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016), a strong relationship based on trust and proximity can compensate for isolated failures and significantly enhance customer retention. These interactions for example, are particularly important in service industries where human contact plays a major role.

2.5.3 Types of Touch Points in the Customer Journey

Moreover, they also highlight the existence of different types of touchpoints throughout the customer experience. These interaction points can be grouped into four main categories, those managed directly by the brand, those handled by strategic partners, those controlled by the customer, and those influenced by external or independent actors. The relevance of each category may vary depending on the stage of the process previously mentioned, the type of product or service, as well as the specific characteristics of the journey of each customer. To identify the most critical touchpoints at each stage, attribution models can be applied to guide companies in recognizing and optimizing key moments of interaction. The Process Model for Customer Journey and Experience look as follows:

Figure 10

Process model for Customer Journey and Experience



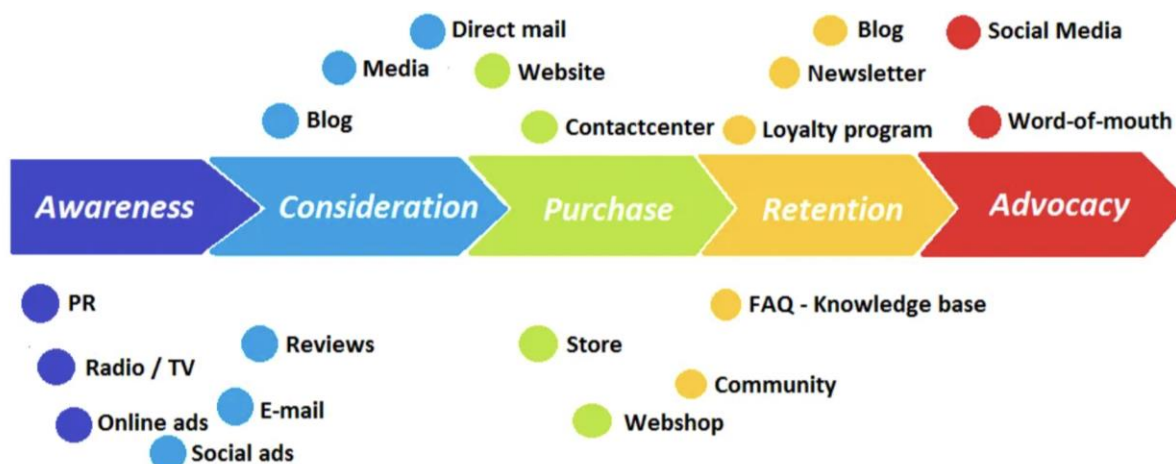
Note. Taken from the study “Understanding Customer Experience Throughout the Customer Journey” by Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey, Lemon and Verhoef, 2016, *Journal of Marketing*, 80(6).

In overall, this model describes how customers interact with a brand across the three key stages we broke down above, pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase. It highlights that the customer experience is shaped by multiple touchpoints across various channels and devices in an omnichannel environment. The model emphasizes a holistic view, where the overall experience is not just the sum of individual interactions, but a continuous, integrated process influenced by the customer's context, emotions, and the seamless coordination of channels. The post-purchase phase is especially important for fostering customer satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy beyond the initial transaction.

According to other authors, Arimetrics (2026) propose that the customer journey can be divided into five key stages, awareness, consideration, purchase, retention, and advocacy. Each stage includes specific touchpoints, such as advertisements, website interactions, customer service, and social media feedback, that influence customer perceptions and behaviors. The following diagram illustrates these stages and touchpoints in a linear and cyclical flow, highlighting the continuous interaction between the customer and the brand:

Figure 11

Customer Journey stages and touchpoints



Note. Taken from Arimetrics, 2026.

Every lead goes through various stages before becoming a loyal customer, thus, optimizing the customer experience at each stage increases the likelihood that leads will remain engaged and ultimately convert. Therefore, it is essential for marketing, sales, and customer service teams to align their efforts around the five key stages of the customer journey.

The first stage is awareness, where potential customers are just discovering the brand and its products, at this point, they're seeking information or solutions to their problems, often turning to social media, search engines, or recommendations from friends and family. For example, if a person searches on Google for "pens for left-handed people," their journey begins when they first become aware of a brand offering such a product. It is important to focus on providing helpful content that answers question and builds trust, rather than pushing sales aggressively (Customer Alliance, 2022).

Next is the consideration stage, where customers start evaluating the brand as a potential solution, they compare the products with alternatives, seeking reasons to choose an specific offering. Here, customers want to see product features that clearly address their needs without feeling pressured to buy. For instance, a nutrition coaching app might create content comparing itself to in-person nutritionists, highlighting the unique benefits of the app, for example. Overall, this phase focuses on positioning the solution as the best choice through informative and problem-solving content (Colman, 2022).

The third stage, purchase, is the decision-making moment, when customers are ready to buy. However, the decision may not always be in our favor, as buyers could opt for competitors options, then, to maximize conversions, businesses should provide really clear and comprehensive information, such as pricing details, comparison guides, and also implement

strategies like abandoned cart email reminders to encourage customers to complete their purchases. Once a customer has bought from us, the journey continues into the retention stage.

Most professionals say that maintaining existing customers is generally more cost-effective than acquiring new ones, making retention a critical part of sustained business success. A great way to maintain positive and ongoing engagement is by creating and sending regular email communications, discounts, and exclusive offers, as this helps to foster loyalty and encourages customers to return to our brand and make repeat purchases (Colman, 2022).

Finally, in the advocacy stage, satisfied customers become brand ambassadors who actively recommend our products or services to others. This stage extends beyond retention by motivating customers to spread positive WOM. Brands can encourage advocacy by offering referral bonuses, loyalty programs, and special deals to their most engaged customers, thus perpetuating the cycle of customer acquisition and loyalty (Colman, 2022).

Understanding these stages of the customer journey is fundamental to develop effective marketing and omnichannel strategies that improve the omnichannel customer experience. There are several ways in which digital marketing tools and omnichannel approaches can be leveraged to optimize it throughout these stages. By focusing on creating seamless and engaging experiences—from awareness to advocacy—brands can not only improve conversion rates but also build sustainable relationships with customers in increasingly competitive markets. Consequently, analyzing the customer journey stages provides a critical framework for identifying key touchpoints where targeted marketing efforts and personalized communication can have a great impact, which is central to the objectives of this research (Colman, 2022).

3. Methodology

This research follows a qualitative approach, since the main goal is to explore how AI has been integrated into the OCE, both from the perspective of consumers and from professionals of the field. A qualitative method is suitable here because it's possible to capture opinions and beliefs that go beyond what numbers alone can show, giving a deeper view of how people experience and perceive AI in the retail market.

To answer the research question, three complementary studies were carried out. The first study focused on consumers through semi-structured interviews. I spoke with five Gen Z participants from Colombia who had recently interacted with AI services across different channels (e-commerce, app, website, and physical stores). The questions explored how AI influenced different dimensions of their experience, cognitive, behavioral, emotional, social, and sensorial. For instance, I asked whether AI made their shopping journey easier or more complicated, if personalization left them feeling satisfied or frustrated, if it replaced or complemented human contact, and how the design of the interface shaped their perception of the brand. The interviews were done virtually, lasted between 15 and 30 minutes, and gave participants the space to explain their personal views in detail.

Study 2 focused on professionals. I interviewed four managers working in marketing or customer experience roles within companies already using AI in an omnichannel context. The purpose was to understand how organizations integrate tools such as chatbots, sentiment analysis, real-time analytics, or recommendation engines into their customer journeys. The conversations, in general, were about the benefits of AI in terms of personalization, convenience,

and consistency, as well as the main challenges companies face when adopting these tools. These interviews added the managerial perspective, showing how businesses interpret and implement AI to improve customer experience.

Study 3 involved real time observations of consumers. In this case, I observed three participants while they interacted with AI-powered services across at least two different channels. The observations covered not only visible behaviors, such as the time they spent navigating, their purchase decisions, or the way they moved through platforms, but also emotional reactions expressed during the interaction, the idea here was to compare and enrich what came up in the interviews, providing concrete examples of how AI shapes consumer behavior in practice.

Across the three studies, participants were intentionally chosen for their relevant experience with AI in retail. Recruitment was done through LinkedIn, personal and academic contacts, and consumer communities from retail companies in both Colombia and France.

Finally, all steps of the research respected ethical principles. Participants were informed about the goals of the study and how their data would be used, they gave their consent before participating, and I guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, with the data being used only for academic purposes.

Altogether, this three studies offers a complete picture of how AI is transforming the customer experience across channels, bringing insights that are valuable both for academic research and for industry practice.

4. Results

4.1 Real-time Customer Experience Observation

This tracking was carried out through observation but also involved conversational and interrogative approaches to better understand the initial and final stages. The real-time tracking was specifically done during the consideration, purchase, and delivery stages. The way customers discovered the product and everything that happened post-purchase was narrated by them. Below is the information recorded during the observation:

Participant #1

Name: Valeria López

Age: 22 years old

Product purchased: Sustainable fashion dress

Brand: Lish (Colombia)

Valeria was browsing Pinterest looking for aesthetic summer outfit ideas. She spent about 2 minutes scrolling on her phone when she found an image of a beautiful gradient blue dress that really caught her attention. She looked up the brand's name on Instagram, it was Lish, a Colombian sustainable fashion brand.

Valeria spent quite a while looking at the brand's content on Instagram, especially the reels. She saw a few girls mixing and matching outfits, giving styling tips, and showcasing different pieces from the brand. The content was really well-made and she seemed to enjoy it a lot. She mentioned she liked that the brand had a clean aesthetic with neutral colors and messages about environmental impact, saying that it really resonated with her.

After that, she went straight to the website. It was very easy to access. She explored the site a bit, browsing through the different pieces, until she found the dress she had seen on Pinterest. She added it to her cart and then added two more items.

When heading to the checkout, she made sure the sizes and prices were correct. However, there was no information about shipping times, so she opened the customer service chat. At first, she was assisted by a bot, but then a real agent answered her questions via WhatsApp. Once everything was clear, she proceeded with the payment using Nequi on her phone. Afterwards, she received emails and text messages to track her order, which she found very helpful.

Table 1.

Valeria's Customer Journey

Stage	Channel	Touchpoint	Emotion
Awareness	Pinterest	Search for aesthetic outfits	Curiosity
Consideration	Instagram	Looking out the reels of the brand	Interest
Purchase	Web/Whatsapp	Purchase and customer service	Confidence
Delivery	Email/SMS	Order tracking	Expectation
Loyalty	None	None	None

Source: Own Elaboration.

Participant #2

Name: Tomás Restrepo

Age: 20 years old

Product purchased: Wireless gaming headphones

Brand: Razer (US)

Tomás shared that he was watching Twitch streams when one of his favorite streamers recommended some newly launched gaming headphones. He found the link in the description

and went to Razer's website. As soon as he entered, a pop-up appeared with an interactive quiz to help him find the model that best suited his gaming style. He found it fun and interesting, so he completed it.

He didn't even need to search for the headphones, as they were featured in a banner on the homepage as the brand's latest release. He added them to his cart and completed the purchase easily from his computer, paying with a credit card.

He immediately received a confirmation email and was able to track the shipment from his account on the website. What he liked most was the real-time tracking system with an interactive map showing the package getting closer to his house step by step.

When the headphones arrived, they were well-packaged and met all his expectations. Three days after the purchase, he saw an interactive story from Razer on his Instagram feed inviting him to answer a short survey about his experience. He decided to complete it, even though he usually doesn't participate in those kinds of things.

Table 2.

Tomas's Customer Journey

Stage	Channel	Touchpoint	Emotion
Awareness	Twitch	Streamer recommendation	Enthusiasm
Consideration	Razer's Web Site	Test to choose the model	Confidence
Purchase	Web Site	Purchase	Excited/Impatient
Delivery	Email/App	Order tracking in real time	Expectation
Loyalty	Instagram	Survey in stories	Curiosity

Source: Own Elaboration.

Participant #3

Name: Sebastián Ramírez

Age: 25 years old

Product purchased: Smart fitness watch

Brand: Whoop (US)

Sebastián was watching YouTube videos about functional training routines because he had recently committed to getting back into a healthy lifestyle. During one of the videos, he saw an ad where a guy was working out with a smart watch that tracked heart rate, counted reps, and even gave hydration reminders. He said what really caught his attention was the masculine, sporty, and modern design of the watch. At the end of the ad, the brand name Whoop appeared.

He paused the video and searched for the brand on Google. He accessed their website from his laptop and started browsing. There, he found a model even better than the one in the ad—it had way more features. He carefully read the full description, looked at the photos, and went through user reviews.

He then searched for the brand's Instagram account to see more content. On Instagram, he found video testimonials from athletes, mini tutorials on how to sync the watch with a phone and watched all the highlights under the FAQ section. He spent around 30 minutes doing his research.

After that, he searched the watch model on Google and noticed it was available on Amazon at a lower price. He thoroughly checked the description and details to confirm it was the same model as on the official website. He decided to purchase it on Amazon to save money. At checkout, he paid with a credit card and was able to track the order. He received a confirmation email, and the

next day, the product was already in his hands. He shared an unboxing reel on his personal Instagram account and tagged the brand.

Table 3.

Sebastian's Customer Journey

Stage	Channel	Touchpoint	Emotion
Awareness	YouTube	Ad before training video	Enthusiasm
Consideration	Whoop's Web Site/Instagram	Exploration of the Web Site	Confidence
Purchase	Amazon	Purchase on Amazon checkout Page	Excited/Impatient
Delivery	Email	Order confirmation and shipping tracking	Expectation
Loyalty	Instagram	Unboxing reel	Satisfaction/Happiness

Source: Own Elaboration.

4.2 Professionals Interviews & Customers Interviews

For these results, the information gathered from interviews with professionals and customers will be included in the appendix. Only the most valuable insights are quoted below, providing an overview of the data.

5. Data Analysis and Results

The results are organized into three main sections. The first section presents the analysis of the tracked customers, highlighting their behaviors and key findings. The second part examines the perspectives of both customers and professionals, highlighting the similarities and

differences between the two groups, and the final section provides the triangulation of the three data sources, offering an integrated interpretation of the findings.

5.1 Real-Time Customer Experience Observation

A similarity than could be found on all participants was that, at the beginning of the customer journey, each of them discovered the product through content platforms that often personalize what users see based on their interests. Valeria came across the dress on Pinterest while searching for summer outfit ideas. Tomás found the headphones thanks to a Twitch streamer's recommendation, and Sebastián saw an ad for a fitness watch while watching workout videos on YouTube. Although the use of AI isn't always visible, it's likely that recommendation algorithms played a role in bringing these products to their attention.

When considering the purchase, all three participants took time to explore the brands through different channels. Valeria viewed Instagram reels from the fashion brand, appreciating the brand's visual style, Tomás interacted with a fun and helpful quiz on Razer's website, which suggested the right model for his gaming needs, a clear example of AI use, and Sebastián did a deeper search, reviewing the product features and browsing the brand's Instagram content, including tutorials and testimonials. This stage showed how important it is for brands to offer engaging and informative content across platforms, making the research process feel smooth and consistent, just how participants perceived it.

For the purchase itself, all participants used online channels. Valeria completed her payment with Nequi after reaching out to customer service via WhatsApp, where she first interacted with a bot before being assisted by a human agent, Tomás made his purchase directly on the Razer website using his credit card, and Sebastián, after comparing prices, chose to buy

through Amazon instead of the brand's official site. All these behaviors and choices reflect how customers now move across platforms to find what works best for them, that's why companies should strive to offer a good omnichannel experience to support that flexibility and increasingly improve their customers' experience.

The delivery phase was positive in all three cases, Tomás especially highlighted how much he enjoyed the real-time tracking with an interactive map, which added excitement and trust to the experience, Valeria received email and text notifications, while Sebastián got his confirmation and tracking updates by email. While these tracking systems may not always involve advanced AI, they do play an essential role in keeping customers informed and engaged through the process.

After the purchase, only Tomás and Sebastián engaged further with the brand. Tomás answered a short survey that appeared on Instagram Stories, and Sebastián posted an unboxing video and tagged the brand. On the contrary, Valeria didn't take any additional steps, which could be a sign that the brand missed an opportunity to build loyalty. These post-purchase actions matter a lot, they're often a result of how good (or bad) the earlier experience was, and they help keep the brand top of mind for customers.

Overall, the data collected from this tracking suggests that the companies involved are beginning to adopt digital tools, and in some cases, artificial intelligence, within their omnichannel strategies. From chatbots and personalized recommendations to real-time tracking and automated surveys, these tools are helping to create smoother and more customized experiences, Nevertheless, in these three particular cases, the integration was not that extensive, they interacted with technology, but it didn't necessarily involve AI, only in some parts.

Tomás had the most clearly AI-driven journey, and it left him highly satisfied. On the other hand, Valeria and Sebastián also interacted with useful digital elements, though with different levels of integration and impact.

In terms of customer experience, the use of AI (well-integrated) and omnichannel strategies seems to make a real difference. Having the freedom to use multiple platforms, get timely support, and stay updated on their order made the process feel more convenient and trustworthy. Still, the experience wasn't perfect. Valeria's uncertainty about shipping details shows that even small gaps in communication can affect the overall journey. So, while AI can enhance the customer experience, its success depends on how well it's implemented across all touchpoints.

5.2 Professionals Interviews

The interviews reveal diverse applications of AI across different industries, with varying levels of integration into omnichannel customer experiences. While some companies are in early testing phases, others have developed more advanced solutions.

Initially, Melissa González (Omnichannel Assistant at Estée Lauder) highlighted a gradual adoption process, where AI is mainly applied in CRM and loyalty programs for personalized communications, translations, and skin diagnostics in physical stores. She explained, *"We want to use AI to generate personalized offers and attract more customers to loyalty programs... we are just beginning our first hyper-personalization project."* However, regulatory constraints, data protection laws, and human resource limitations slow down the implementation process.

On the other hand, in the dairy sector, Stalin Ulloa (IT and BI Manager at Alpina) explained that the primary role of AI is in data analysis and automation rather than direct customer interaction. He pointed out that, although the technology speeds up decision-making, there are opportunities for emotional engagement, such as shelf talkers in stores. However, there is also customer skepticism about how companies currently use artificial intelligence; it is still not well received by some consumers. Alpina, in particular, has faced criticism for launching campaigns fully generated by AI. Stalin mentions: *“A commercial made entirely by AI can receive comments like ‘they’re no longer hiring people’, ‘they’re leaving them without work’...”* That’s why campaigns are still mixed, combining AI with human intervention to precisely avoid this kind of ‘hater’ comments.

From another perspective, Natalia Rodríguez (Category Manager E-commerce at Falabella) showed a more integrated approach within e-commerce, where AI is embedded across multiple touchpoints of the customer journey. She explained how AI-powered tools such as *Atenea*, used for analyzing consumer feedback, and *Elena*, designed for monitoring search trends, work hand in hand with AI-generated visuals to enhance marketing campaigns and product presentations. According to her, this combination not only optimize operations but also strengthens brand positioning and consumer connection. As she stated: *“AI helps us save time, understand the consumer better, improve our search engine positioning, and reach the client in a more direct and intelligent way.”*

In contrast, Juan Nicolás García (Paid Media Account Manager at Algofy) emphasized AI’s strategic role in increasing the perceived value for their clients through campaign optimization and product review analysis. He noted that AI allows marketers to make data-driven

adjustments in real time, enhancing campaign performance and relevance. However, he also pointed out a clear gap between what people think AI can do and the real value it brings: *“Many times we are all looking for AI strategies just to look more interesting and relevant in the current market.”* He stressed that companies shouldn’t use AI just as a buzzword or a way to look trendy, but should actually integrate it in ways that deliver real results and long-term value.

In general, the data suggests that AI’s omnichannel integration varies widely, from targeted personalization and sentiment analysis to operational efficiencies and visual improvements. However, adoption is often blocked by regulatory issues, technical complexity, resource constraints, and a need to balance automation with human touch to maintain trust and emotional connection.

Additionally, this analysis also reveals that even when companies operate in different sectors, such as luxury beauty, food manufacturing, retail, or digital marketing, common themes and several similarities emerge. In all cases, professionals expressed most of the time, or even always, that human oversight is needed in AI-generated outputs to avoid potential errors and make necessary corrections. They are also aware of the importance of adapting AI tools to each specific stage of the customer journey to offer a better omnichannel experience, as well as the growing demand for AI literacy within teams. This suggests that successful omnichannel AI strategies are not specific to sectors but rather depend on the organizational adaptability each company applies and the cultural readiness they have to innovate in these areas, since it is clear that this is still a relatively new topic, even for companies that integrated AI a few years ago.

5.3 Customers Interviews

The interviews conducted with customers seek to explore their behaviors, feelings, and frustrations across the five key dimensions of the customer experience, emotional, sensorial, social, behavioral, and cognitive. Each participant was invited to share a personal experience involving interaction with artificial intelligence at some point along their customer journey. Based on these situations, the interview questions were personalized to deepen the understanding of how AI influenced their perceptions, decisions, and satisfaction throughout the process.

What came out of the five consumer interviews shows some interesting patterns. While each case has its own details, several themes came up repeatedly, especially regarding the usefulness they see, the difficulties they face, and the channels they prefer.

To begin with, AI-driven tools such as recommendation engines were, in general, well received. Dania, for instance, shared: *"The watch I wanted was out of stock, and the system showed me other brands and models that were very similar, with similar prices. Thanks to that, I was able to choose another one that was almost identical."* This kind of functionality not only addresses immediate needs but also encourages additional purchases, creating value for both the customer and the brand. Similarly, María Fernanda described how Rappi reminded her of previously purchased items, which prompted her to add more to her cart: *"I had forgotten about it, but the AI reminds you or creates that need again."*

In contrast, chatbot experiences were mostly negative. Both Juan Felipe and Paula highlighted their frustration with the lack of helpfulness from these tools. Juan Felipe explained: *"When you have a complaint to make through a chatbot, it's extremely difficult [...] I'd rather be assisted by a human."* Paula echoed this sentiment, expressing her disappointment with the lack of clear answers and real support: *"The AI was useless—it didn't give me any information on*

where my order was or why it hadn't arrived." These types of experiences not only generate frustration but can also lead customers to abandon digital platforms in favor of physical stores, or even, not returning to the brand in order to avoid having another negative experience.

Interestingly, there were also positive cases where AI, used in physical spaces, improved the customer experience. Juliana described a self-service system at Leclerc where she scanned items while shopping, speeding up the checkout process and giving her more control. *"It made me feel like I could do everything by myself, without wasting unnecessary time,"* she shared. This kind of implementation shows how AI can really help make in-store operations run smoother.

Although participants varied in their preferred channels, some favored digital platforms for convenience (Dania, María Fernanda), while others still preferred physical stores to better evaluate products (Juliana, Paula), most agreed that digital channels are helpful when well executed. Dania summarized it clearly: *"The online store makes shopping easier, especially when you know exactly what you need."* However, she also pointed out technical glitches, such as losing a product in the cart due to a minor input error, which illustrates how even small issues can affect the overall experience.

Lastly, the information gathered suggest that well-implemented AI has a direct impact on consumer behavior. María Fernanda mentioned that the personalized suggestions in Rappi encouraged her to spend more time on the app and buy more items: *"You start thinking, maybe I need this... or that too,"* which clearly illustrates the influence of AI on decision-making and customer engagement.

6. General Discussion

By analyzing these three types of data together, several insights emerge. First, AI is already present in multiple touchpoints, but its impact and visibility vary significantly. The observations showed that recommendation engines, chatbots, and tracking systems often facilitate the journey. This matches with the consumer interviews, where participants expressed appreciation for product recommendations and reminders, perceiving them as useful and convenient. Professionals also confirmed that these tools are among the most widely adopted, particularly in marketing, CRM, and e-commerce. However, both customers and professionals emphasized the importance of human oversight, since AI outputs are not always accurate or sufficient to fully address consumer needs.

Second, the analysis reveals a clear gap between potential and actual implementation. Professionals pointed out that AI adoption is often slowed down by regulatory, technical, or cultural barriers. This could explain why, in the observations, AI integration was partial and sometimes limited to basic functions like automated messages or standard tracking. Customers' frustrations with chatbots further highlight this gap, showing that poor execution can damage trust and satisfaction, instead of improving them, this indicates that companies need not only to adopt AI but to do it strategically, ensuring that tools add tangible value.

Third, the data converge around the importance of omnichannel consistency. Across all three sources, the customer journey was described as nonlinear, with users moving between platforms, channels, and devices. The observations showed customers switching from social media to websites to marketplaces, while consumer interviews highlighted the role of digital and physical touchpoints depending on the context. Professionals echoed this, noting that true AI value comes when systems are integrated across channels, offering personalized, seamless, and

relevant experiences. This suggests that omnichannel strategies supported by AI are not a competitive advantage anymore but more a necessity to meet consumer expectations.

Fourth, emotions and perceptions play a central role in AI adoption. Customers often reacted positively when AI saved them time, offered relevant options, or made processes more efficient, as in Juliana's experience. Conversely, negative emotions arose when AI felt impersonal or unhelpful, as with chatbots. Professionals recognized this duality, noting that campaigns fully generated by AI can spark skepticism, underscoring the need to balance automation with human touch. Thus, successful AI integration is not only about efficiency but also about maintaining authenticity in the relations between the customer and the brand.

Finally, while some companies, like Falabella, are already embedding AI across their operations, others are just beginning small projects. The readiness to innovate and train teams in AI appears to determine how effectively firms can leverage technology to improve the customer experience. On the consumer side, this translates into whether they perceive the journey as smooth and personalized or as fragmented and frustrating.

In summary, the triangulation shows that AI is becoming an essential enabler of omnichannel strategies, but its success depends on strategic integration, cultural adaptability, and emotional sensitivity.

7. Conclusion

When analyzing the three cases together, the real-time observations, the interviews with professionals, and the interviews with customers, a key convergence emerges, it is clear that AI can significantly improve the omnichannel experience, but only if it is implemented carefully, coherently, and without neglecting the human touch.

In all three analyses, the same idea comes up, AI works best as a support rather than a replacement for human interaction. It is very useful for personalizing, streamlining processes, and making the customer journey more convenient, but empathy and problem-solving remain the domain of people. Personalization is, without a doubt, one of the most valued aspects, more accurate recommendations, optimized searches, and personalized messages make the experience gradually better, more fluid, and more appealing. However, when these tools are not well integrated across the different channels, the effect fades and the experience feels fragmented, losing its purpose entirely. There is also a consensus that automation needs to be balanced, chatbots, for example, can be practical, but if they cannot handle complex situations or frustrations, they end up worsening the experience. That's why they should be able to recognize those moments and escalate such cases to a human advisor, something many chatbots still fail to do.

Conversely, the differences found lie mainly in the focus, customers speak more from an emotional perspective, they get frustrated with cold interactions and highly value tools that anticipate their needs. Professionals, on the other hand, focus more on the strategic view, AI works well if the company is prepared, knows how to integrate it, knows their customers, and is clear about what it wants to use it for. Real-time observations, for their part, show the most tangible results, personalization and order tracking build trust and comfort, although small communication errors can damage the experience.

In summary, AI does improve the omnichannel experience for both customers and companies, but it requires certain conditions such as full integration across channels, intelligent use to personalize and speed up processes, sensitivity to detect emotions, and consistent deployment supported by strong internal coordination, when all this is achieved, AI not only

facilitates and optimizes, but also builds trust, comfort, and loyalty. If not, it can end up feeling indifferent and disconnected, losing much of its value.

8. Limitations and Suggested Future Research

This thesis contributes to the existing literature by offering an initial perspective on the integration of AI in the omnichannel strategies of companies in the retail sector, as well as its perceived impact on customer experience throughout the customer journey. However, as with any empirical research, this study presents certain limitations that open the door to future research opportunities.

First, one of the main limitations lies in the size and nature of the sample. Only four retail professionals and five consumers were interviewed, and the behavior of only three customers was tracked during their purchasing process. This qualitative approach requires a significant investment of time per participant, as data is not collected through large-scale surveys but rather through in-depth, personalized interactions aimed at capturing meaningful insights and contextual details. Moreover, the limited availability of time from the professionals interviewed slowed down the data collection process and made it more difficult to expand the scope of the study.

In addition, it is important to consider the potential observer effect, since the customers who were tracked were aware that their behavior was being observed and recorded, there is a possibility that their actions were not entirely natural. This awareness could have influenced their decision-making or the way they interacted with different channels, which may introduce a certain degree of bias into the findings.

Second, the research was primarily conducted in two countries, Colombia and France, with a stronger focus on the Colombian context. While this allowed for the contrast of certain cultural and operational elements between the two markets, a more international and diverse approach could offer broader insights into how AI integration and customer perceptions of the omnichannel experience may vary across geographic and sociocultural contexts.

In the future, further research could expand this analysis by adopting quantitative methods that allow for a more precise measurement of the impact of AI on the omnichannel experience, considering new perspectives and approaches. This thesis focused on emotional, sensory, cognitive, social, and, above all, behavioral dimensions, however, it would be valuable to explore other complementary dimensions that could enrich the understanding of the phenomenon, such as ethical aspects or even those related to neuromarketing. Additionally, expanding the sample to different regions could help determine whether the relationship between AI and customer experience changes depending on cultural or social contexts. Lastly, future studies could delve into the relationship between AI implementation and constructs such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, perceived personalization, or trust, thus strengthening the overall understanding of this evolving phenomenon.

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