

THE IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION ON FIRMS IN THE RETAIL INDUSTRY OF UK

MSC IN ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE MANAGEMENT

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Candidate Declaration

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I, Rughda Yousuf, hereby declare that the dissertation titled ‘The Impact of Digitalization on firms in the retail industry of UK’ is the result of my work and the interpretations drawn herein are based on information collected by myself. I also wish to declare that due acknowledgement is given and cited appropriately where reference is made to the work of others.

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Abstract

The aim of this research to analyse the process of digitalization in the retail industry in the United Kingdom. The process of digitalization has had an impact on the all the industries throughout the world and has also changed the landscape of the retail industry in UK. The main objective of the research was to find out the impacts through primary collection of data through questionnaires which were given to 250 respondents to find out the customer-based response and 4 questionnaires to retailers to see the changes that have been made by the retailers due to the digitalization. The findings were that now the customers have a more digital-centric approach when it comes to sources of information and their shopping experience in retail outlets and this process will further gain momentum in the future.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this research is to identify the impact of digitalization on the retail industry in the United Kingdom and how it is led to changes in the processes of this industry. Digitalization is not an integral part of doing business, it is about everything people do. In addition to the automation of work and services, the digital world extends to society as a whole: digitalization is making more and more information available to everyone. The ability to refine and utilize the growing amount of customer information supports the success of a company, as customers can be offered increasingly individual and smooth solutions. It is interesting to monitor the pace at which the means of producing and receiving information change and how central to the success are the customer's expectations and experiences of operations (Wang, Sanchez Rodrigues and Evans, 2015). The customer's role as a facilitator and influencer of opinion is growing enormously with the opportunity brought by digitalization.

As traditional business models change, the approach becomes more customer centric. The production of customer-oriented digital services is a prerequisite for the success of many companies in the future. Digitization is used to develop existing operations and, at best, to create completely new types of service solutions. A key factor in the success of the services is the customer's experience of interacting with the company in a digital environment. In the future, the importance of the digital customer experience will become even more important as companies bring their operations and services more and more to the digital environment (Brenes, Ciravegna and Montoya, 2015).

The importance of a successful customer experience is already talked about quite commonly today. However, the factors influencing the formation of the customer experience cannot be seen as separate development projects or customer interface functions but are linked to the entire organization's operations and all related interactions with the customer. Bringing the customer experience and digital development to the core of the strategy gives direction to operations

and helps to see how the entire supply chain affects the formation of the customer experience. It is essential to understand a successful customer experience as one of the goals of digital change, so that digital development is in the right direction, producing customer-oriented solutions and a unique and smooth customer experience (Arcidiacono et al., 2016).

1.1 Research Background

Retail trade, i.e., all forms of sale of goods to their end users is addressed in this study, especially for physical retail stores, although it also covers online trade and mail order. Distance selling, from both a trade and consumer perspective, is very different from the traditional buying experience of a stone-foot trade that should be addressed in separate studies. Digital change refers to the integration of new digital technology into aspects of society, as well as the resulting changes and other impacts (Norman and Kabwe, 2015). In the context of this study, therefore, digital change refers to changes brought about by new technologies in the way in which retail has traditionally operated, for example in relation to the viewing, advertising, and payment of products.

Part of the digital transformation is the blurring of the differences between digital and physical retail sales channels from both a consumer and a commerce perspective. In their study, Beck & Rygl (2015) describe this phenomenon and specify its different forms. The study divides the phenomenon into three different concepts: multi-channel, cross-channel, and omni-channel retail. In multi-channel retail, there are multiple sales channels, but they are separate from each other, and customer interaction cannot occur in multiple channels simultaneously (Ngo and Nguyen, 2016). Inter-channel retailing, on the other hand, allows for partial mixing of channels, such as the placement of different phases of a purchase transaction on different channels. This literature review specifically addresses all-channel retail.

An important part of the change is the digitalization of the consumer, i.e., the growth of the younger generation, especially in digital technology and social media. According to the study, the consumption behavior of young people is also significantly different compared to previous generations. Retail must be able to offer consumers the opportunity to utilize the technology to which they are accustomed, as well as to communicate more closely with them on social media. From a business point of view, increasing information and transparency are key (Kell, 2017). When customers demand information about products, their prices and the stock situation, retailers collect data on their own and competitors' operating methods. As the amount of data increases, more and more useful information can be analysed from it, which, can be used not only for automation but also for optimizing the entire ecosystem surrounding trade. The traditional model to the analysis of competition, with the help of which they form four competitive forces caused by digital change (Chitrakorn, 2015). Digitalization allows customers to easily compare prices and trade with each other. In addition, new technologies enable new products and services, which replace the old ones and can drive them out of the market.

1.2 Aims and objective

The purpose of the dissertation is to map the significance of digitalization on firms in the retail industry of UK and to find out how digital customer experience is reflected in the strategy and management of companies. The research goal of the dissertation is to produce management support information that enables companies to enhance their ability to incorporate digital customer experience management into their strategy. The development goal is to provide a concrete outline of how strategic management can influence the key factors influencing the formation of the digital customer experience in support of strategy work. The information produced with the help of the dissertation can be utilized in the next phases of a three-year UK retailing, when digital change is implemented

and digitalize business is developed in a customer-centric way. In addition, the information produced by the knowledge base and research is intended to be generalizable so that it can be utilized in business management and development.

1.3 Rationale of the Research

The knowledge base covers key concepts related to the topic, such as impact of digitalization on retail industry, customer experience, digitalization, customer orientation in business, digital customer experience and the importance of strategic management (Donnelly, 2020). Through a review of the concepts, a more accurate understanding of the topic of the dissertation can be formed. It is essential to understand the comprehensiveness of the formation of the customer experience and the effects of digitalization on it, so that the topic can be viewed from the perspective of strategic management.

Based on the research the digital change in retail comes from a change in consumer habits and needs, to which retail tends to adapt and thereby compete with customers. A key factor and enabler of change is the smartphone that is constantly involved in trade (Arcidiacono et al., 2016). Consumers are accustomed to being able to use a smartphone to help them get information and make a purchase decision both inside and outside the store. The smartphone, with all its features, influences consumers' attitudes and expectations, however from a retail perspective, it serves as a platform for data collection through mobile payments and location tracking.

1.4 Research questions

The research problem is to find out how the digital customer experience is understood from the perspective of strategic management of a company.

1. How is impact of digitalization on firms in the retail industry of UK reflected the sector?

2. Does the digital customer experience is managed easily because of digitalization in retail industry?

The research questions are used to map how the digital customer experience is reflected in the company's strategy and management. In addition, the supplementary materials are used to find emerging themes from the knowledge base that are associated with digitizing business, to provide an understanding of the underlying phenomenon. The development task is used to provide a summary of the key dimensions related to the digital customer experience that can be influenced by strategic management.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been developed for this research, with the aim of analysing the impact of the process of digitalization on the retail industry in the United Kingdom:

H1: Consumers have shifted to digital channels for information from retail outlets.

H2: The rise of e-commerce platforms has led to a rise to customers shopping online in UK.

1.6 Structure of Dissertation

The structure of the dissertation consists of the steps shown

1. determining the purpose of the study
2. establishing a knowledge base on key concepts
3. Evaluating literature review with pertinent researches
4. Methodology section (Questionnaires)
5. analysis of the results and key conclusions
6. a summary outlining the key dimensions of the digitalization on UK retailing firms that can be influenced by strategic management

Research shows that the digital transformation of retail is an evolving phenomenon that involves several different technologies that are changing the way consumers behave. In the literature, the most important of these technologies became mobile payment and space positioning, made possible by the widespread use of smartphones, and their combined effects are fully automated stone foot trading.

The knowledge base addresses the importance of customer experience, strategic management and digitalization more broadly, as understanding customer experience as a key part of digital transformation and the core of the business is something that will determine the company's future success very well. The research section examines how the digital customer experience is reflected in the strategies of the retail's companies in the UK and how it is managed in practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Digitalization

Digitalization is a megatrend that affects all industries and the competitive position of companies. In particular, it affects sales and marketing. Competition has become more international, industry boundaries have become blurred, and the global operating environment is creating a completely new kind of competition (Strønen, 2020). Business environments are becoming more complex, uncertain, ambiguous, unpredictable, and change is happening fast. Competition between companies intensifies as the market expands geographically - on the other hand, it also opens up opportunities for companies that previously operated locally. The digital environment opens up opportunities for new players, and new business models create new products. Digitalization strengthens the customer's position and bargaining power when product and price information is available to everyone. Digitalization is said to affect everywhere, forcing change in all domains and all areas of business processes. Thus, the technological revolution will not only affect the IT departments of organizations but will benefit all businesses and retail units (Loske and Klumpp, 2020). According to Accenture, however, UK organizations are still in the early stages of moving towards digital business, although digitalization is claimed to enable significant changes in business operations. The objectives of the dissertation are centrally related to understanding the current state of retail electrification and the related development needs in the transition of the digital age or at its dawn. The knowledge base of the dissertation is based on written materials, publications, research, and articles related to business administration and information technology, as well as the author's two decades of work experience. The following sections look at definitions and theories of retail and digital.

2.2 Customer behavior

With digitalization, the way customers buy, acquire information, and consume has changed. Customers share experiences and opinions online and on social media. Social media has created a whole new way to express themselves and the opportunity to build a personal brand for everyone, regardless of status (Bollweg et al., 2019). Due to the change in customer behavior, consumers have more say and companies should adapt their own actions to customer purchasing patterns. In the digital world, more options are available to customers, most services can be purchased by anyone from anywhere in the world, so it is no longer enough to “be the best in the neighbourhood” as a measure of service level.

2.3 The breakthrough of technology

The enablers of digitalization are technological innovations and their applications. The speed of development and declining prices have made inventions more commonplace for the masses, and technology is no longer the exclusive prerogative of IT professionals. There has been a particularly rapid development in wireless data transmission, which has accelerated the development of smartphones, tablets, and other smart devices. One of the biggest changes affecting “traditional” technology-driven industries in particular is the use of the industrial Internet: The number of built-in sensors and interconnected smart devices is growing and the amount of information, big data, from them is exploding (Krasnyuk, Yanenko and Nazarova, 2020). The winners are those who know how to analyse and utilize the information they collect correctly in their product and service development.

Digitalization is also shaping the competitive landscape of companies, as virtually everyone operates in a global market. It is just as easy for customers to buy products from both foreign and foreign online stores. For foreign players, localization in the UK market is just a translation of the website into UK. Credit card payments and EU legislation have made it easier for goods to move across

borders. In addition, new competitors may enter the market from a completely new industry. Many new competitors design their operations directly for the rules of the game and business models of the digital age, which can differ much from the processes of a traditional old player, usually in favour of a new business model. Digitization should not be seen in a company as a single project or as a task of a particular department but should affect the business models and strategy of the company as a whole (Seethamraju and Sundar, 2019).

2.4 Purchases

Technological developments and all the related upheavals in the different periods of history, from the development of 19th century electrical engineering, have all presumably changed the retail methods of each era. Several literary sources predict the next revolution will be associated with a revolution in digitalization. According to a report from the ICT 2015 working group of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, “ICT will change the world more than electricity in its time”.

The operating models related to the organization's retail are determined by the reference framework of the external and internal operating environment. Each individual function of the retail process produces information. Various information is collected in databases, registers, and information systems, such as ERP, purchasing and ordering systems, and financial management systems. Tacit information is collected for the organization's employees and suppliers, as well as in a more and less exploitable form such as external data repositories on the Internet, social media, and various cloud services. The most important task of retail has been to procure cost-effective or economically advantageous retail contracts for the organization and to maintain and manage contracts and suppliers. Organizations need to acquire a variety of resources, goods, and services to enable their operations. The needs of the operations, the technical and operational characteristics of the stakeholders determine the requirements of the

objects to be acquired. Depending on the industry, retail activities are also affected by the organization's business strategy. Other factors influencing retail may include operating models, organizational rules, legislation, culture, industry, suppliers, customers, employees, competitors, technology, and costs (Glocker and Piribauer, 2020).

2.5 Retail process

The retail process includes three main phases: the design phase, the implementation phase and the monitoring and maintenance phase. In the planning phase, the content of the acquisition is defined and, if necessary, the market supply is mapped. During the implementation phase, suppliers are tendered, compared, and selected, and a retail contract is concluded. In the third, monitoring and maintenance phase, operational routines are performed. Operational routines include traditional ordering, monitoring of orders, deliveries, contract suppliers and contracts, as well as management and maintenance of product information, and, for ICT contracts, monitoring the implementation of service levels in accordance with the terms of the contract (Svatoš, 2021). In addition to the previous steps, the public retail process includes the procedures and deadlines regulated by the Retail Act. Purchasing is responsible for delivering the product at the right time, place, and price. Supplier choices have an impact on the delivery process. On the other hand, to meet the conditions for sales, the development of the delivery process requires regular updating of the product range. An organization's product policy usually defines the products and services to be offered. As a result of the small product range, the retail has must anticipate deliveries of all possible product combinations and prepare for special arrangements. Good product management and the right supplier choices thus affect product availability, total costs as well as inventory turnover (Barann, 2018).

2.6 Retail and digitalization

The supplier market offers a wide range of IT solutions for managing the retail and delivery process, from extensive ERP systems to stand-alone small software. The software provides support for demand and production and financial planning, management of the various stages of the tendering process, contract management, purchase and ordering process, and logistics management. The functions listed above can operate integrated or separate from each other. With the help of Business Analytics, i.e., BA, retail can perform sales and risk analyses to support its decisions. The most important unifying factor is knowledge. Businesses need information about different information systems and at different stages of business processes. Acquisition costs make up most of a company's costs and are divided into several lines in the financial statements (Logistics World).

Not all investments are recognized as retails because they are carried out as part of larger projects as projects and separately from the retail units. Compared to indirect acquisitions, investments are distinguished by the difference between their one-off nature and the method of accounting. Acquisitions can be either direct or indirect. Direct retail includes parts, components, products, or services required for the organization's core business, the manufacture of end-customer products. An example is an industry whose purchases of materials directly related to the final product sold include direct purchases. The report of the Committee on the Future stated that new technology, new operating models, and the multiplicity of the world are currently changing the structure of work and Finland's position in international value chains, and that companies. Digitalization is a relatively new concept and is not yet widely established. Market vision Tuominen's blog post states that the consulting company Gartner will include all electronic manifestations of information technology in the definition of digitalization (Nanda, Xu and Zhang, 2021). The Ministry of Finance, in turn, defines digitalization as a way of reforming operating methods, digitizing internal

processes, and electrifying services.

2.7 Internet of Things

Gartner defines IoT as a growing number of devices that have their own IP address and that produce or receive information using IP technology. New information technology is said to make it possible to improve productivity. The pressures for change arise from the operating environment related to the organization's business idea, so the most important thing related to change will be how well the organization is able to identify change trends, utilize the opportunities of the operating environment and renew its operations in practice. However, productivity can improve when the introduction of technology is combined with a new kind of work and management culture (Ribbeck-Lampel, 2020). It has been said that if the external operating environment of an organization changes faster than the internal one, it is obvious that organizations face challenges. Enabling and embracing change and the transformation air circuit should be fundamental tasks of any management.

Cloud services are the dynamic provision of software, hardware, or services to customers via the network. Cloud service technologies enable and transform digital functions. Typical cloud services include software, and these include application services and server platforms. The most familiar cloud services for individuals are the social media Facebook and Twitter, as well as storage services such as Dropbox and Google Drive. It is possible to implement cloud services with different technologies depending on the needs. Pil-vi service retail models include, for example, public cloud, private-private cloud, community, or hybrid cloud services. For example, in a private cloud, the organization itself acts as a user and provider of services. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which operates under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Commerce and considers public administration regulations, defines cloud services as a business model that provides access to freely

programmable and scalable IT resources that are easy to deploy or disable. According to NIST, the characteristics of cloud services include self-service, access to services on different terminals, sharing of resources, accurate measurement of flexibility and use of services (Malenkov et al., 2021). However, according to a 2015 study by consulting firm Accenture, no vision would come true without cloud services.

When considering the acquisition of cloud services, the main factors that affect the implementation and whether and to what extent it is worth moving to should be clarified. Factors to be explored may include the benefits and total costs of the current operating model compared to the costs of transition to cloud services and maintenance. Other factors may be the organization's readiness to become a user of cloud services and the identification of risks and information security factors related to cloud services. According to domestic studies, one of the biggest obstacles to the utilization of cloud services has been mistrust in the information security of services. Cloud services are also not yet procured for business-critical environments. When functions are digitized, the safety factors of the service provider's product should also be considered. The Personal Data Act imposes some restrictions on the storage of data. Public administration classified or other information creates its own requirements for the systems. There are no directly applicable laws for the use of the Pii service. One of the key issues when considering the suitability of a cloud service for an organization is related to the service provider's right to utilize the customer's information stored in the service. Through cloud services, small businesses can acquire similar solutions as previously only available to larger customers at an expensive acquisition price. Smaller companies have the advantage that they do not have the burden of large-scale systems invested years ago. This is probably one of the biggest reasons for the popularity of cloud services in small businesses. Another reason for the proliferation of cloud services has been mobility (Blazejewski and Walker, 2018).

2.8 Mobility

The wireless communication networks of the future will be able to transmit information faster all the time. The use of wireless networks has grown exponentially. Also, many of the terminals connected to the telecommunication network are non-traditional computers. They can be cameras, various reading devices for written materials, cars or devices related to building technology. Today, there are 10 billion devices on the Internet, but by 2020, there will already be 30 billion. In 2011, world shipments of smartphones exceeded shipments of terminals such as workstations, laptops, and computers. In order to increase the use of mobility, the devices and the software used in them should be accessible and user-friendly, i.e., usable. Usability can also be viewed from the perspective of terminals and the software services provided therein. Mobile development focuses on improving this user experience and on three different levels: A responsive solution, a separate mobile-optimized site for mobile use, and application implementations for mobile devices. In web services, the responsive implementation is based on the widespread HTML5 technology, in which the page elements that modify the appearance of the page automatically adapt to the screen size of the terminal used. In a mobile-optimized website, parallel self-maintained versions of the web service are implemented, running on all operating systems (Gavrila Gavrila and de Lucas Ancillo, 2021). An alternative to mobile optimization is an application, which is a downloadable phone application developed for the phone model type. This option is said to consume half less organizational resources than application development on three separate platforms. The desired implementation of the software service must be determined already at the retail planning stage so that the chosen service is suitable for the buyer's purposes.

2.9 Information management

The amount of information and information flows are increasing as more people and organizations take advantage of the various mobile technologies that enable information to be collected. People's market behavior, use of social media, devices and goods with RFID or other similar chips, smart sensors, or trackable tags can gather information into a data warehouse. By combining information from different information sources, such as mobile devices or social media, stores can gather information and study consumers' consumption habits. The traditional concept of information management is understood as the management of information about material, cash, and information flows (Akhila, 2019). The concept also includes product lifecycle data, customer usage analyses, future-related information, self-service, and Internet use. Knowledge management is based on reliable and decision-making information and the creation of new information, both by processing and extracting information. When traditional business applications collected pre-event-based logistics information for retail planning, now new advanced analytics programs can process and process data in various formats from all data sources, or Big Data.

When purchasing decisions were made decades ago, based on experience or perhaps just emotions, with the increase in information technology and computer performance, detailed information in electronic form began to support decisions. On the other hand, with digitalization, our environment is also constantly changing from 'intelligent more coiled'. Big Data also includes several new and old technologies, such as websites, browser usage, sensor technology, social media, mobile devices, and location data collection. Knowledge is divided into data elements, binary numbers, information, knowledge, and wisdom. The information appears as structured or unstructured documents, images, videos, and e-mail files. The information can be open, public, closed or secret. It can be raw, processed, verbal, visual, sound, or tactile. It can also be fact, fiction, or entertainment. The information may also be tacit or expressed. The information

can also be metadata, i.e., information about the information or core information. It can relate to social, machine-handled, or business-related information. The road usually has an owner and is at its best located in only one place and once. However, the most valuable of all is processed information, which, when interpreted, provides some added value to the user of the information (Pousttchi and Dehnert, 2018).

Data mining refers to a set of methods that aim to find the most relevant information in a large mass of data. Data mining includes statistical, learning methods as well as descriptive and predictive methods. The data source for data mining is data, which can be, for example, an extract from a database or log file. The final output of the processed and processed information can be a visual presentation or report leading to some goal. One example of data mining can be found at McKesson. McKesson cut supply chain costs by \$ 1 billion over five years (Mäenpää and Korhonen, 2015). McKesson's pharmaceutical distribution unit has revenue of \$ 97 billion. The unit processes 60,000 active items daily in 30 distribution centers, delivering 2 million products to 25,000 different outlets such as hospitals, pharmacies, and private medical clinics. Cost savings were achieved by first analysing product quantities, manufacturing sites and shipments. The data collected was then mined with intelligent software. The software unearthed all the extra costly functions. According to McKesson, the operational development process is a major breakthrough in which "everything previously invisible has become visible".

Inside the Big Data Revolution describes another, slightly different example of data collection. The University of California is developing a technique that calculates and estimates the number of people moving in a given area by measuring signals based on a wireless network. From the changes in the signal, the numbers of people moving with the accuracy of one or two numbers of people can be calculated by mathematical calculation methods. Big Data is all-knowledge-based intelligence that shapes and combines digital and physical

realities, creating the basis for future waves of innovation and operational efficiencies. Big Data is changing the retail of information systems and their investment structures. Performing algorithms and analyses becomes a significant and even larger area of investment than information systems or ERP systems. Devices and operating systems are given less weight in organizations and resources are left to make better user interfaces, data visualization, analysis, and algorithms. Big Data thus means the storage, collection or analysis of an indefinite, unorganized and huge amount of data in digital form by computer means. Big Data is a tool for forming a perspective or philosophy on how decisions will be and how they might need to be in the future (Hagberg, Jonsson, and Egels-Zandén , 2017).

2.10 Strategy

The strategy is used to make decisions that will enable future success. The development of the strategy requires precise analysis, creativity, and in-depth knowledge of the industry logic, as well as determined action in all parts of the organization to produce successful operating models. According to Davenport, it is profitable for organizations to utilize analytics in creating business strategy. A business strategy alone may not be sufficient to control retail, as retail may have a more responsible or broader role. In this case, the preparation of a longer-term retail strategy is desirable. The retail strategy serves as a tool for retail management and development (Chernova et al., 2020). The key guidelines of the retail strategy can be decisions related to outsourcing and self-manufacturing, guidelines for supplier selection, measures related to national and global retail and risk management.

The Logistics World website provides guidance on retail management as follows: If the range of services and products to be procured and the differences between the required contract suppliers in the market are varied, it is advisable to group retails into different categories. In this way, more precise goals and policies

can be created for them. Traditional SWOT analysis can be used as a tool for retail strategy to identify an organization's strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities. The purchase portfolio model developed by Peter Kraljic in the 1980s can also be utilized as an aid to the retail categorization of products and services and as a starting point for creating a retail strategy, in which those acquired are placed in four fields according to product importance and market (Kemppainen, 2017).

The study identified the most important technology-related investments by 2,000 companies and 10 industries in 9 different countries. The study found that 62 percent invested in digital technologies, but 35 percent already invested extensively in them as part of their business strategy. Strategy always has a problem of definition: "Everything that is important is not strategic, but everything that is strategic is important - although perhaps not right now". According to him, operational issues are of strategic importance, especially when it comes to influencing structural practices related to, for example, production equipment, economics, or production control systems. In the 1980s, Harvard University researcher Michael Porter coined the term 'competitive advantage' in connection with the value chain model of activities. In a competitive advantage, the value functions of organizations should always be implemented in such a way that the added value produced exceeds the costs incurred. Organizations achieve a competitive advantage better than their competitors if they focus on reducing or implementing the costs of their value chains better than their competitors (Gould, 2019).

2.11 Innovation

Combining real experiences and quick satisfaction is a very effective method in terms of consumer trends. Retailers continue to add these features to their services. For example, their in-store wireless internet connection allows shoppers to share their experiences and favorite products on social media, and to

examine their sites in more detail. It is also possible for them to interact during the sale through surveys. Retailers can differentiate and make their brands stand out more as they stop thinking of their stores as just a display space for their products with walls and move towards developing alternatives to offer a more personalized experience. Stores are adopting the practice to track the customers from the internet connection that they use and give them recommendations which are customized based on their experience. This allows them to see if the customer is visiting their store for the first time or is making a repeat purchase at their store. The future of this industry includes giving the customers suggestions based on their purchasing patterns and informing them if a product they wanted is back in stock (Hokkanen, Walker and Donnelly, 2020).

As per Syaglova (2019), customers in the UK will be ready within the next two years for scheduled trade as devices will be able to make purchases for the customers as 49 percent of consumers based in the UK believe the process of shopping has become much faster due to digital technology which leads us to believe that the customers are now ready for an era of retail shopping that will be done through automated processes.

2.12 Future of Retail Industry

The retail industry continues to shine without slowing down. With its global value of \$3,000 trillion, its appeal is also increasing. Page Group shares its knowledge of its research and observations on the retail industry as follows; In 2015, The Hut Group from the retail industry took the top spot among Retail Week's rapidly rising retailers in the UK, thanks to its success and growth with its international presence and impressive e-commerce channels. Earlier this year, Retail Study showed that retail is getting more and more specialized. For example, retailers in the fashion industry have always sought higher caliber customers to compete with online channels. Retailers that employ dedicated

specialists can add more value to their products by improving their customer experience.

According to Ofcom's " Media Use and Behaviors 2015 " report, adults use the internet for about 20 hours a week (Liao and Yang, 2020). This number was only 10 hours per week in 2005. It is possible to say that e-commerce has exploded recently, especially in China. There is a 50% increase in the annual business volume of the retail sector every year. It is clear that we will remain dependent on the Internet for everything we do. That's why the integration of digital retail strategies is of great importance. The retail industry is working to improve the in-store experience by utilizing digital options to improve consumers' shopping habits. Scan-and-go systems, as well as virtual test booths and shopping apps that offer recommendations, are just a few examples of retail's efforts to upgrade the customer experience with technology (Syaglova, 2019). By putting the control in the hands of the consumer, they provide the opportunity to review their products on mobile devices as they wish and to provide paid home service, meaning that the retail sector attracts customers by blending traditional methods with digital.

In big cities, it is almost a race against time. For example, if we look at the city of Istanbul in the country we live in, we encounter many city problems. There is traffic, people spend a lot of time on the way to work. Especially for people living in big cities like Istanbul, online supermarkets will provide great convenience. Because these applications save time. When they enter the site, they can easily find the products they need, and products similar to the ones they are looking for will appear, and the site will help them determine their needs. Being able to shop with the click and collect method will also provide great convenience to the elderly and disabled people who know how to use technology but cannot leave the house (Hänninen, Kwan, and Mitronen, 2020). The reasons that make online shopping the most attractive for people are the wide range of products, convenience, and ease of use. But convenience isn't everything. Consumers do

not want to deal with late delivery, wrong product delivery or reliability problems if they are online only. To date, few retailers have given consumers a compelling reason to switch from the neighbourhood grocery store to the web. Innovative approaches introduced by Industry 4.0 into our lives are at a level that will relieve customers' concerns (Krasnyuk et al., 2019). The important thing is that companies in this market provide the best service to their customers. This service will be provided with the benefits of Industry 4.0, which is the great revolution of our age. In online retailing, robots, internet of things, augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and fast internet.

2.13 Software and Artificial Intelligence (AI) System

The company is experimenting with one of the biggest innovations in emerging retail automation. The new technology, called the Ocado Intelligent Platform (OSP), is based on a concept where, instead of carrying crates along a conveyor system, products are picked up by armies of robots from a densely packed three-dimensional grid or 'hive'. The products are stored in the packages in this hive and moved to the upper parts when necessary. Robot teams connect to the system via wireless 4G connection, pack and transport products and reduce the need for manual processes as much as possible. With the scalable concept, the need for wide corridors has been eliminated and thus the dependency on manual human labor has been reduced (Rakhy and Vijayan, 2018). Given all this automation, it's a question of whether Ocado will need human workers in the future, but the firm's technological innovations will undoubtedly leave the traditional workforce behind, employing more R&D engineers instead of unskilled labor, and investing even more in technological activities. will be done. The company employs 36 R&D engineers and is working to increase this number to 60 by the end of the year. Ocado is engaged in various external cooperation projects as well as internal R&D activities (Končar et al., 2020). Notable among these is the humanoid maintenance robot created to assist engineers to make

repairs and access areas which are deemed as too dangerous for human operators. Except that, UAVs are used instead of fixed cameras to monitor the interior of the facilities and autonomous delivery vehicles are being developed.

Customers' orders are processed at Ocado's automated facility in Dordon. With Ocado's richly instrumented fleets, the most efficient path to each safe is calculated and even has a software system that takes this into account and is controlled by the AI system. According to Sid Shaikh, the company's head of R&D engineering, the service they offer is unlike online marketplaces that are designed like traditional grocery stores. In particular, the technology they use is quite different. Shaikh promises “fast and sustained innovation”. With digitalization, distances are rapidly decreasing. Shopping centers are gradually giving way to online shopping (Proskurnina, 2020). In this way, customers both save time and get tired less. It is no longer just products such as technological tools, clothes, household goods; Many market products such as foods and cleaning materials that people need daily have also started to be sold over the internet in various countries. Perhaps the most important of these is Ocado.

Founded in 2000, Ocado made its first profit in the UK's massive £179 billion retail market in 2015, making it the UK's largest online supermarket. The company has a giant auto warehouse in Hatfield. The facility is on a five-floor area and a 25-kilometer-long conveyor network. The ordered products are automatically transported from the special picking station without the need for any human being. Routes are created for products up to 1000 boxes. As the approach is different from anyone in the grocery industry, much of the core technology had to be developed in-house (Proskurnina, 2020). They have finally created a smart technology that controls all the complex shopping processes end-to-end. This environment is fast-paced, innovative.

2.14 Digital branding and social media

Social media applications offer individual users the opportunity to produce the content they want and to share their own thoughts and perspectives with others. All of the correspondence tools that use these applications are called social media. Businesses have also kept up with the benefits and prevalence of using social media, and they have started to carry their activities that they previously carried out through their websites to social media (Leung et al., 2019). Today, the use of social media by many businesses from different sectors; information is disseminated quickly and cheaply in an actually friendly environment, the target audience is well known, and interpersonal intimacy is strengthened through direct communication without mediation,

As per a report published using the global internet index data, 3.419 billion people worldwide are now using the internet, and 2.307 billion users are actively involved in social media. 1.968 billions of 3.790 billion mobile device users use social media via mobile devices. In the UK-related section of the “digital in 2016” report published by we are social, the 2016 data on web and social media user statistics are as follows; In UK, where 79.14 million people live, the number of users connected to the internet is 46.3 million (Tang, 2021). The number of active social media users is 42 million out of 46.3 million internet users, 36 millions of which are connected via mobile devices. In the use of social media channels, Facebook ranks with 52%, twitter with 17% and Instagram with 16% followed by google+, skype, LinkedIn, Viber and vine come. When the web and social media user statistics for 2015 are compared with the 2014 report, it is seen that the active internet users in UK increased by 5%, the active social media users by 11%, and the number of mobile users by 2% (Leung et al., 2019).

The domain essence of the brand and the style of the hosting are very important. Strategic representation of the digital brand and drawing its goals and as the next step. Website design, menu systems, user-friendly implementation of the brand, creation of digital brand strategy and digital branding steps,

implementation of digital branding (emblem, logotype, striking word, digital brand identity) phases, monitoring of brand's website traffic and constant repetition. modelling, determining the SEO strategy, determining the digital content production strategy of the brand, sub-brands of the brand and micro-site installation and connections, determining the keywords strategy of the brand, producing active digital content for the brand's digital assets, and fine-tuning each of the contents (Bollweg et al., 2020).

2.15 Conceptual Framework

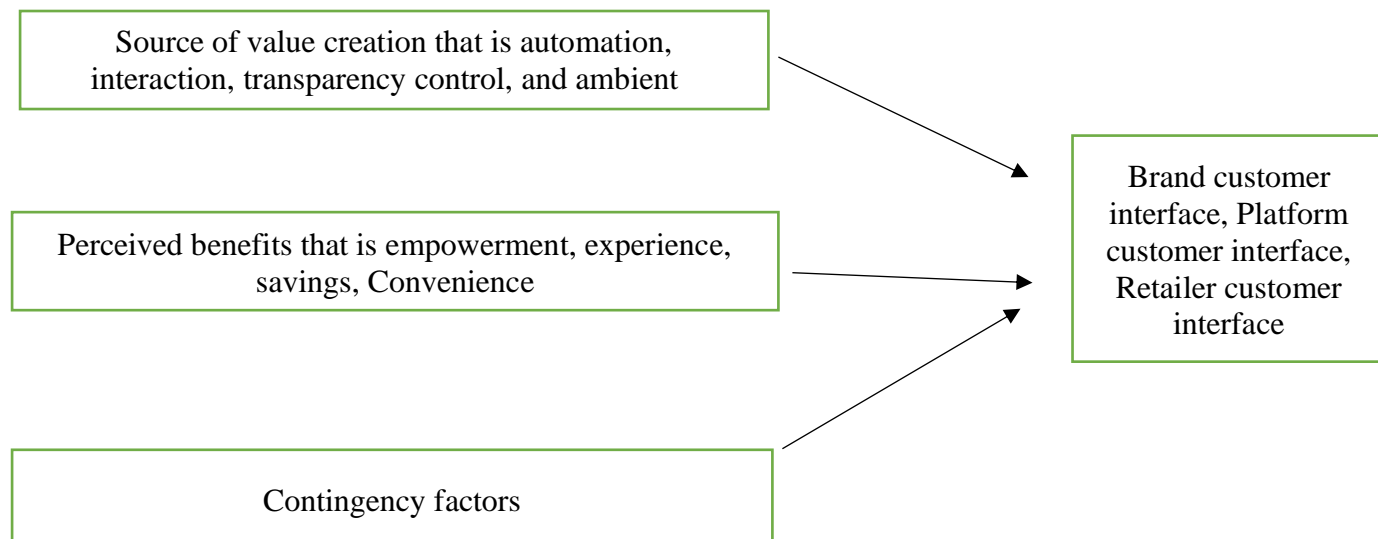
In a retail value chain, the impact of the process of digitalization can be seen a lot of ways. The implementation and the design of the decision-making behavior while making a purchase impacts the ability in many cases in terms of working with customers on important issues. In these cases, large retail outlets and the digital counterparts such as smartphones, online stores and IoT devices could then be the primary target for the customers and their transactions. An example of such a situation is Amazon which is one of the biggest and comprehensive search engines for products along with being a retailer. This allows Amazon to be to influence the decision making of the consumers as they use the search to find more information, compare prices and then purchase the products. They are able to add unlisted products to the package reviews of the customers and the recommendations, ratings and reviews on the listings tend to then have an impact on purchasing decisions of the customers. This allows Amazon to look into customer insight and then use the information to help them as a retailer (Beatty and Smith, 1987).

Additionally, digitalization creates a structural impact on the value chain of the retail industry. When competition is created to the original interface of the retail store, i.e., the physical store, value creation for the customers tends to increase. From a perspective of value creation, the process of digitalization has created and highlighted new opportunities for customers as it allows them to have

more options and different alternatives to make their decisions from. This provides a new experience and learning opportunities for the retailers as well as they can learn the consumer behavior and shopping patterns from a new perspective (Doherty and Ellis-Chadwick, 2010). Consumers also now want have a more personalized shopping experiences and digital technologies essentially provide these tools for brands in order to cater to the needs of these customers. (Kim, Wang and Malthouse 2015).

There are several reasons which have led to the growth of online sales of products, which include easier and better access to the information, a better transparency for customers in terms of the suppliers, a major wider range of options to choose from and lower prices. Even though existing retailers have the necessary functions needed to create value for customers, it is still not clear how they can create value for the end consumers and how the process of digitalization will affect them (Belk, 2014).

The framework for this research will provide an overview of the affects caused by digital transformation on the value chain in the retail industry as the process of digital transformation will create new sources of value creation. The main resources are customization, integrated environment, automation, transparency and monitoring and collaboration which leads to the benefits for customers which are compliance, experience, comfort, savings of money and efficiency (Demirkan and Spohrer, 2014). The proposed framework can be seen below:



3.METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to explore factors of the impact of digitalization on firms in the retail industry of UK. The purpose of this research is to identify the influence of digitalization on the firms of UK and to attain the information about technological developments to help grow business of the retail industry. This chapter discusses the methodology, research design, and data collection procedures.

3.1 Research Design

For this study, quantitative research methods have been used using questionnaires for customers and four questionnaires for retailers and secondary data making the study causal-comparative. Research methods refer to concrete data acquisition and analysis methods or techniques of empirical research, which in turn can be classified into qualitative and quantitative methods (Pousttchi and Dehnert, 2018). Some methods are presented in more detail at level two. This chapter mainly focuses on the presentation of various methodologies in terms of primary and secondary data, as well as on variable thinking in management, the concepts of validity and reliability, and the main features of the methodology related to data acquisition (Nanda, Xu and Zhang, 2021).

The dissertation focuses on quantitative primary data such as questionnaire, interviews, and literature as secondary data as they are suitable as per the title of the work. The data analysis has been a vital part of any research and for the latter it has been helpful to attain information about the dissertation topic (Lê and Schmid, 2020). There is literature related to the impact of digitalization on firms in the retail industry of UK and has been used to identify and look towards the data analysis more closely. In practice, during the research process, it is quite common and, in some way, relevant that when selecting the methods and data as well as weighing various options, the choice is directed to something other than what was originally planned (Lo, Rey-Martí and Botella-Carrubi, 2020). In this

case, it may also make sense to change the research problem to reflect the real situation (Nind and Lewthwaite, 2019). The most important thing is consistency, which is not a desirable situation, the task is to formulate the research problem as well as choosing the techniques in order the data in a way to ensure the research is logically functional.

3.2 Validity and reliability

When level of research is assessed along with the validity of conclusions, the concepts of reliability and validity are mainly used, which can be related differently to the reliability of research as a source of information (Moen and Middelthon, 2015). The reliability of the research indicates in research that the analysis has been done in a way through which the results in research can be considered reproducible (Marvasti, 2018). Poor reliability can be considered as a result of, for example, non-systematic errors that could be resulting from negligence in, for example, coding, data collection, or calculations, or other measurements related to analysis (Strijker, Bosworth and Bouter, 2020). Qualitative research can involve, for example, a translation error or the inaccurate disassembly of a recorded interview.

Verification of reliability is much simpler in quantitative studies, wherein principle and often also in practice, the key steps of the study can be repeated. In a qualitative study, it is essential and important to document the course of the research so that the study audience (including potential inspectors) can be assured of the correct course of events, even if, of course, they cannot renew the same participatory observation work (Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017).

Research results can sometimes contain large errors due to poor reliability. However, validation is usually a higher quality criterion for research, due to the involvement of potential systematic problems which could occur in interpreting research. In general, validity can be defined as the reliability that are of conclusions drawn from the data (Wagner, Kawulich and Garner, 2019). Validity

is generally separated into internal and external reliability, the sum of which can be referred as the total validity. Internal validity is the systematic reliability which is used for the implementation of the research process.

Problems related to research concepts and in particular to the operationalization of concepts can be considered as a typical problem of internal validity (Sheard, 2018). The roots of the validity lie in the experimental study, where it is understandable that the research situation (especially the measurement situation) must be cleaned of uncontrolled situations that may affect the results (Jung, 2019). Applying this traditional validity to social science research is, of course, very difficult, and could in turn lead to major problems for research ethics.

The criterion of internal validity in qualitative research can be applied, for example, when a researcher seeks to ensure that the conceptual or theoretical structures made by the researcher correspond to the actual perceptions and experiences of the research subjects (construction validity) (Samuels, 2020). This, of course, can also prove difficult. Often, however, mere reflection on this type of case can improve the researcher's perceptions of the results, their interpretation, and generalizability. In infield research, of course, one can always try to extend the work period, in which case one can imagine getting to know one's research subject better (de Block and Vis, 2019).

The realization of external validity, in turn, can be promoted, for example, by carefully describing the research process as a whole (research subject, research conditions, own reasoning process). In addition, in the case of a case study or a small N comparative set-up, the conditions for generalizability of the results can be considered openly.

Further, the validity can be improved by utilizing as many aspects of the research object as possible, which is commonly referred to as triangulation. Researcher triangulation, in which several researchers participate in the same research at different stages

- of theoretical triangulation, in which the phenomenon under study is

viewed from the perspective of different theories

- data triangulation, in which an attempt is made to solve the same problem by analysing different research data
- methodological (or methodological) triangulation, in which several research methods are used for the same data. In this sense, in particular, triangulation comes close to the research method "mixing methods" approach. The quality of the dissertation has been maintained by attaining the method i.e., secondary for the impact of digitalization on firms in the retail industry of UK. The research has attained the accuracy of measure and the consistency with the help of qualitative data (Uher, 2018).

3.3 Research philosophy

Research in a practical and multidisciplinary field such as urban planning is both fascinating and demanding, as the demands of science and practicality often overlap. Much of the research is relevant, but not directly applicable to design work. In comparison, the practice of planning is full of completely unfounded perceptions and general criticism about one's work and that of the profession (Uher, 2018). In this atmosphere, research has a variety of tasks. It should contribute to the formation of a diverse civilized, critically thinking architect or another designer identity (Turner and Lambert, 2015). It should impart multidisciplinary knowledge and research methods to the scope of design research.

The topic that has been chosen is the impact of digitalization on firms in the retail industry of UK. Limiting research means, above all, putting up a research problem. In qualitative research, one of the problem sets is generally quite flexible and, in some situations, it is not compulsory to define precise research problems, but a more overall research task can also be assigned to the research (Gama and Alves, 2021). For this study, Quantitative research has been considered using questionnaire, interviews and qualitative for literature.

However, it is important to delimit and define the problem so that the answer to it can be found through research. A good general guideline is to avoid scratching a large phenomenon and instead strive for a more in-depth examination of some narrower area. Research problems may change along the way, as often the problems only crystallize as the research process progresses (Al-Ababneh, 2020). Research problems play an important role. They keep the research together and prevent the researcher from falling into side paths that are irrelevant to the research.

A good research problem is unambiguous. It includes, in the form of one or more questions, a crystallization of what you want to study and know about. In qualitative research, where the goal of the research is often to describe and understand a phenomenon, research problems are usually what-and-how questions, but this does not mean that qualitative research could not include other question questions (Patel and Patel, 2019). However, qualitative research does not answer causal questions about causation.

The materials can be divided into natural materials created without the researcher's influence, such as pictures, journals, and documents, as well as materials produced by the researcher, in which case the material has been produced. It is important to note that the material is never just collected but produced (Benfell, 2021). It is a good idea to set aside time and resources to collect the material. At the research planning stage, it is also necessary to think, at least initially, about how the data can be analysed.

3.4 Quantitative Research

This study has use quantitative research as a method of inquiry. Quantitative research examines educational patterns by assessing or measuring individual abilities (Puri, 2019). This method of inquiry employs rigorous data collection procedures to capture the essence of the participants' voices and understand the construction of their social reality (Daniel, Kumar and Omar,

2017). Moreover, quantitative research is a deductive strategy, which utilizes existing theories. Through open ended questions, we have investigated the need for all retailers competing with Amazon to offer cheaper costs or costs. However, this is not a long practical measure for any retailer at a sensible price. There are object-based vendors who soften determination and mark the commencement of dead time. Manufacturers and wholesalers are increasing their interest in improving products. Administrations and management that differentiate the brand and create new bases of data. Retailers and brands find comparable customers and value their customers uniquely. customer data - tendencies and dates, lifestyle and tendencies, using methods such as non-natural awareness and artificial intelligence to more precisely expect what goods customers have requested, merchants also offer numerous options for exceptional customization. Stores such as Amazon, for instance, offer options where clients can choose their equipment and choose whatever from texture to shape, size, and sofa example. (Valunaite Oleskeviciene and Sliogeriene, 2020).

3.5 Survey Research

Surveys are of great importance in medicine because the survey is the easiest, fastest of the research methods, and is also included as part of other research settings, such as randomized trials. A questionnaire is most useful when it is tested, reliable, relevant, reproducible, technically sound, clear and, where necessary, identifiable (Loru, 2020). Sending, receiving, and saving the form must also be planned in advance to ensure a good start in analysing the results. Important factors for answering the questionnaires are the written feedback received by the respondents after the survey, the (monetary) fees, the shortness of the questionnaire, the readability, personality, and cover letter mentions in response to the benefits of the research and society. The decades-long decline in response rates in national population surveys may come to a halt if at least some of the above factors are taken into account (Melnikovas, 2018).

3.6 Secondary Data

A secondary data check is an examination of data collected by another person. The main benefit of using secondary data is that it is usually more practical. The other person has actually composed the data, so the investigator of the research will not have to spend money, time, energy, and resources during this stage of the research. From time to time, it is necessary to purchase a secondary data set, but the costs are often lower than the costs incurred from the beginning of the reference data set range, which usually include prices, travel and transportation costs, office space, tools, and other overhead costs (Jansen and Warren, 2020). In addition, given the fact that the data has actually been composed and frequently cleaned and stored on an electronic device, the researcher may waste much of his or her time researching the data rather than preparing it.

Another huge benefit of using secondary data is the extensiveness of information available. The state conducts a variety of large-scale and public surveys that are difficult for individual researchers to gather. Many of these information sets are also longitudinal, denotation that similar data were collected from similar populations over a couple of diverse time periods (Saunders and Bezzina, 2015). This will allow scientists to get a glimpse of patterns and changes in miracles over time.

A third significant advantage in the use of secondary data is that the measurement of the data set often maintains a management and cultured method that may not be obtainable to distinct investigators or small study projects. For example, the selection of data from a large number of public data sets is carried out on a regular basis by staff members who represent considerable power in specific assignments and who have been involved for a number of long periods in said space and research. Numerous more modest research projects lack such an attitude because low-maintenance subcontractors collect a lot of data (Chapman, 2018).

3.7 Casual-Comparative

Casual comparative design is a search design that attempts to find the relationship among an independent variable and a dependent variable when a behavior or event occurs. The researcher aims to determine whether an independent variable or a dependent variable influences the outcome by comparing two or more groups of people. There are similarities and differences between causal-comparative research (also called follow-up research) and relationship research and experimental research (Stuckey, 2015). This article discusses these differences and the advantages, processes, limitations, and criticisms of this type of research project. The tutorial includes examples of the use of causal-comparative research.

3.8 Instrumentation

For this study, Primary and secondary data have to be derived from the various articles, journals, and websites to attain information about the retail business in the UK. The digitalization concept has also been taken from various sources to understand the impact on the business and how it helps the customer as well. The work evaluates the expressive quality development in undergraduate teaching by concentrating devotion on educational practices that are analytically confirmed to be actual in making high levels of knowledge and growth in students.

3.9 Data Analysis

The articles, journals and websites, questionnaire and interviews are primary/ secondary instrument for data collection and analysis. Constant comparative analysis has been used as the data is collected and analysed. Constant comparative examination involves the investigator in a procedure of gathering

and examining the data concurrently at "all steps of the data gathering and explanation process, and results in the identification of codes (Jung, 2019). The researcher has analysed the content of interviews and questionnaire quantitatively. The researcher has use open ended questions to identify themes. The researcher has examined the information found from each participant autonomously and included cross case analysis as well.

3.9.1 Sampling technique

We chose the Sampling strategy to find the answer to the problem faced by every organization. This can be the best way for an organization to take action and agree on new results. The practice of various models can be invaluable in large-scale studies, such as: metropolitan or public studies. The benefit of an irregular model is a modest and simple study of information. A regular model is a method that can be used in a wide variety of study and knowledge. It is inexpensive than other copies and quick to produce. In the standard model, not all recipients guarantee equal freedom. The sample cannot be used in this work because it is smarter to use quantitative and qualitative data (Bhardwaj, 2019).

3.9.2 Sample Size

Differentiated evidence and the definition of study goal models are an essential step forward in the supervision of research. We designed the study based on the population and study data. If random samples are inappropriately selected as a data collection tool, the results will be false and interfere with the dependability of the study. We have launched a review. In this study, the review system and meetings were mixed, with employees sent via contact. We have about 20 questions for this research.

3.9.3 Research Tool

Equipment used to collect relevant data and attain learning objectives. We selected a typical study based on the type of data required. There are many research devices, such as meetings and articles, that we can use to conduct an investigation (Ellis, 2021). Summary surveys are the greatest useful tool and lead to an evaluation survey. This method is a great way to get people's opinion on a particular topic. In this research, 250 questionnaires were sent to random survey population and 4 surveys for employees of different organizations were conducted. All investigations were identified on the execution of the robots in the field and the reason for the investigation.

3.10 Summary

After demonstrating the rationale behind the experiment, guide the reader through each segment of this section. In this study, the researcher used some methods to ensure the validity of the study. This study brought a variety of data to the training sessions that stabilize the digitalization of retail industry in UK. The researchers had the opportunity to draw their conclusions from the collected data. The researcher also had the opportunity at the start of the study to find out if there were any biases and to substantiate these hypothetical doubts and instructions. Finally, the researcher intends to use the input from his council meeting to decide whether the person agrees with the insights and arguments of the information.

4. Findings

This chapter presents the overall findings that were collected in the research through questionnaires (appendix 1) which sent to and filled by 250 respondents that were a part of the random sample in order to collect the data while a questionnaire (appendix 2) was also sent to 4 experts who are working the retail industry in UK.

4.1 Demographics

4.1.1 Introduction

This section highlights the demographics of the respondents who took a part in this research. The questionnaire was sent to consumers of the retail industry who were based in UK and the following findings reflect the demographics.

4.1.2 Findings

The total number of the respondents for the survey for this research comprised of 106 male and 144 females. 17 respondents were under the age of 18 while 97 respondents were between the ages of 18 and 28, 76 respondents were between the ages of 29 and 39 and 46 respondents were between the ages of 40 and 50 while 14 respondents were above the age of 50. The majority of the respondents in this research were between the ages 18 to 39, as 69.2 percent were between this age bracket.

The majority of the respondents belonged to the bracket of 20,000 to 29,999 pounds household monthly income as 105 of the respondents were in that bracket while 77 of the respondents said that they belonged to the bracket of 10,000 to 19,999 pounds. This was approximately 73 percent of the total respondents of the survey who came under this income bracket. The total percentage of the income that is spent on groceries by the respondents showed that majority spent less than 30 percent of their total household income. As shown

in the survey, 34.4 percent spent less than 20 percent of their total household income on groceries while 26.8 percent spent between 21 to 30 percent of their income on the monthly groceries. Only 5 respondents, which is 2 percent of the overall sample size, spent more than 50 percent on the groceries. Comparing the overall household income with the percentage spent on groceries on an average by a household in the UK, it can be concluded that the overall retail market in the UK represents a big percentage of the overall household income.

4.2 Information Channels – Digital vs Traditional

4.2.1 Introduction

This section of the findings highlights the information channels that are being used by respondents of this research. It is important with the aim of this research to find the information channels being used by the customers in order to see whether the process of digitalization has impacted the information channels in the retail industry in UK.

4.2.2 Findings

Among the respondents of the questionnaire, 151 out of the total 250 said that they never read the paper version of the product offers. 52 of the respondents said that they rarely read while only 6 respondents said that they always read the paper version of the product offers in the retail outlet. In comparison to this, 43 people out 250 said that they always read the electronic version of the product offers while 116 of the respondents said that they often read it. Only 33 respondents said that they never read the electronic version of the product offers while 58 said that they rarely read it. 90 respondents said that they always follow the pages of the retail outlets on social media while 95 respondents said that they often follow these pages which allows them to remain up to date with the offers that are given by the retail outlets.

A total of 74 percent of the respondents responded to the question of following the social media pages of the retail media outlets with either always or often, which shows that most of the population of our sample have a presence on the digital platforms of the retail outlets. Only 8 percent of the respondents replied that they never follow the social media platforms of the retail outlets, which is a very small percentage of the total population. Approximately 60 percent of the total respondents said that they never read the paper version of the product offers of the retail outlets while 21 percent said that they rarely read the paper version. In comparison, 46 percent of the respondents said that they often read the electronic version of the product offers that are while 17 percent of the respondents said that they always read the product offers through digital mediums.

When the respondents were asked if they would like to receive information such as product offers or discounts digitally during the shopping experience, 45 percent of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed to the statement while 41.2 percent of the customers said that they would not like to receive the information during their visit. The reasons for this could be that even though a majority would like to have more information, some of the customers do not prefer to use the digital applications while they are shopping. This shows that there is a shift in the shopping patterns of the customers as they now prefer to read the offers on the products through electronic mediums as it is much convenient for them and also supports the theory that the retail industry in UK is now becoming more digitalized.

4.3 Shift Towards Digitalization

4.3.1 Introduction

This section analyses the findings based on the research to find out whether the shift towards digitalization has taken place in the retail industry in UK. In

order to research for information before making their purchases, digital channels such as social media pages and product websites prove to one of the primary sources of information for customers. Getting informed of the details of the product has always been an important part of the purchasing behavior of the customers, however we have now seen that the customers are now shifting from traditional channels to digital channels in order to be more informed and educated about the products.

4.3.2 Findings

A majority of the respondents in the survey agreed to using digital channels in order to gain more information before they tend to make a purchase. 135 respondents out of the total 250 respondents said that they often use digital channels to research for information about products that they purchase while 34 respondents said that they always use digital channels to research for information. This shows that almost 68 percent of the total sample population believe in researching for more information on digital channels before they make a purchase highlighting the shift from traditional channels. Only 13.2 percent of the respondents said that they never use digital channels for information, which means that there are still some consumers who do not use digital channels to research for information.

There are a lot of different channels being used by retailers in order to provide information to the customers through digital mediums. Social media platforms are one of the biggest sources for customers to now gain information of retail outlets where can compare products offers and prices which are being provided to them through the retail outlets. Another primary source of information for the customers are the websites of the retail stores which they can also use in order to make their purchases from the retail outlets rather than visiting the store physically. Advertisements on various platforms are also being used by retailers in the United Kingdom in order to make sure that they are seen by the customers as they believe that it is necessary in order to beat the competition as

now most of the brands are present on the digital mediums therefore the competition now is very tough. This also implies that the competition to being the top of mind recall brand is now present as all the retail outlets look to ensure that they achieve the status being the top of mind recall for the customers.

4.3.3 Key Advantages and Disadvantages

There are several advantages and disadvantages for the brands of using these channels to interact with the customers. The biggest advantage is that they are able to present the necessary information to the customers without them being physically present in the stores, therefore allows them to have a bigger reach which include customers who are not present in the stores. It also allows the retailers to target the customers who are loyal to other retailers and make their purchases there, and therefore can allow them to increase their own customer base. The digital channels also allow them to answer any queries that the customers would have regarded to any of their offers or services without spending a lot of time and allows the customers to have all of their queries answered before they can make a visit to the stores. Similarly, it allows them to look at any issues or problems that the consumers are facing regarding to their own brand as digital channels allow the retail outlets to have a two-way communication with the consumers. One of the biggest problems that the stores face however is that due to the presence of all the retail outlets, the information that they present to the customers can be cluttered due to the excess of the information present on these channels and therefore leading to the customers ignoring the information that their retail outlet is presenting to them.

Retailers believe that the process of digitalization has helped them and the overall retail industry in the UK as well as the customers who can now easily be informed of all the information that they need before they make their purchases. Even though there is a large clutter of information present, customers who are more adaptable to technology find their way to get the necessary information that they require from this clutter and therefore make their shopping experience much

better. With the rise of e-commerce and online shopping, the customers can now also save time and make their shopping experience more convenient. There are several mediums which have helped them in making their experience much better; social media pages and websites have allowed them to be more informed before they make their purchases while websites and e-commerce applications have made their overall shopping experiences much more convenient and easier. The reactions of the customers can be seen by the increasing number of users of these digital mediums which goes on to show that the customers are now adapting to the digitalization process with time.

4.3.4 Technology – Helping Consumers save time?

Self-checkouts have been present at retail outlets at some time and now more customers are becoming comfortable with using them than they were initially when they were implemented at the stores which shows that with time and experience, customers will adapt to newer technologies and start using them as their experience will lead to show that it will make their overall experience better. Personalized applications of retail outlets are now being used by customers in order to make their overall experience of being in the store much better however since it is a newer form of technology for most of the customers, with time more customers will adapt and start using it to make their shopping experience easier.

4.3.5 Digitalized Convenience

One of the biggest advantages of having information easily available through digital channels for customers is now that they can easily compare the prices and information between the product offers in retail stores. As elaborated in the analysis above, most respondents now read the electronic version product offers of retail stores therefore this leads to them also comparing the product offers that are offered by different retail stores. Approximately 26 percent of the respondents said that they always use digital channels to compare the product offers that are offered by different retail outlets while approximately 35 percent

of the consumers often use digital channels in order to compare the products offers between different retail stores and only 14 percent of the respondents said that they never compared the product offers. Similarly, approximately 26 percent of the respondents shared that they always use digital channels to compare the prices of the products they are looking to purchase in different retail stores while 41 percent of the respondents shared that they often do this practice before they make purchases. This behavior highlights that the customers generally tend to look at the digital channels and then compare between the prices and offers from different retail stores so that they can avail the best offer and can make the best purchase. With the customers now shifting towards digital platforms to acquire information, we can also see that the pattern now is heading towards the digitalization of the retail outlets in the United Kingdom.

Another digital platform which is now being used by retail outlets in order to guide and help the consumers during their shopping experience are personalized applications. These have been developed by numerous retail outlets in the UK and are being used by the consumers however they are not being widely used due to lack of awareness. In our survey, 73 out of the 250 respondents say that they never use these applications while 68 respondents said that they rarely use smart applications when they are shopping in the store. This shows that despite the shift towards digitalization of the retail industry in the United Kingdom, smart applications are still not completely adopted by the customers in order to make their shopping experience better. Approximately 43 percent of the respondents still said that they use the applications often and always which shows that there is still a usage of these applications and with time the number of people using these applications will increase.

During the research, the respondents were asked whether they would prefer to have their loyalty cards of the retail stores in a digital format than a traditional one, and a majority of the customers agreed that they would like to have these cards digitally as it would them to use them in a better way. Loyalty cards are

used by customers in a retail outlet in order to receive rewards and points based on their overall shopping and then they can use these points and rewards to get benefits on their future shopping in the retail outlets. 88 of the respondents from the total of 250 strongly agreed that having a loyalty card digitally would be better for them rather than having a traditional loyalty card while 60 respondents agreed with the statement. This represents a 59.2 percent of the total sample size who would prefer having a digital loyalty card in order to redeem the rewards and the points that would be awarded to them on their purchases in the retail outlet. 40.8 percent disagreed or did not agree with the statement that having a digital card would not be beneficial as compared to a traditional one for them in retail stores.

4.3.6 Methods of Payment

When the respondents of the research were asked whether they prefer to make the payments of their shopping through an application rather than make it through credit cards, 58 strongly agreed while 77 agreed that they would like to do the process of payments through an application as it would make the overall process easier for them. Only 30 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement and believed that they would like to still use their credit cards to make their payments. When the respondents were asked the same question of making their payments through an application but instead of using cash, the percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement was much higher as 66.4 percent of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement while only 7.7 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. One of the reasons for people now preferring to use applications is that it allows them to save time in their shopping and allows them to make the payments easily, while the customers also now preferring not to use physical currency because it was highlighted as one of the main reasons for the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, there are still customers even though a small number who would prefer to make the payments in a traditional way which could be highlighted to a lack of trust on digital applications.

4.4 Shopping Patterns

4.4.1 Introduction

This section looks to explore the various shopping patterns that the customers of retail outlets in the UK have and how it has impacted the retail industry.

4.4.2 Findings

The respondents from UK in this research highlighted a similar pattern of their shopping behavior in relation to receiving promotional offers and discount coupons from the retail store. 98 of the respondents said that they strongly agree when asked whether they would like to be sent promotional offers by the store while 75 of the respondents said that they agree to being sent the promotional offers. A total of 69.2 percent of the respondents therefore either agreed or strongly agreed to being sent these promotional offers while only 31.8 percent of the total respondents said that they do not agree to being sent promotional offers. Similarly, a majority of the respondents said that they strongly agree and agree to being shared discount coupons from the stores, with more than 83 percent of the respondents saying that they would like to receive discount coupons by the stores. This would highlight the consumer behavior that generally promotional offers or discounts would always be welcomed by customers as it allows them to save money on their overall shopping experience at the retail outlets as monthly grocery shopping represents a large chunk of their monthly household expenses. Only 17.6 percent of the respondents said that they disagreed and strongly disagreed to being sent promotional offers while only 6.4 percent of the respondents said that they did not want to be sent discount coupons, which is a very low percentage of the total customers.

4.5 Convenience Shopping

4.5.2 Introduction

The shift towards digitalization in retail stores in UK is leading to more customers now looking for a more convenient and time saving experience in terms of their shopping. When the respondents were asked if they would prefer to have self-checkouts in the stores in order to save time, a majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement as they would like to save time. Self-checkouts have now been present in retail outlets and it allows the customers to do the process of the checkout and billing on their own rather using bar codes on the products rather than having a member of the store staff to do the same for them which allows them to save time by avoiding lines at the checkout counters.

4.5.2 Findings

During our research, 62 percent of the total respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement of using self-checkouts which clearly highlights the fact that the customers would look to save time by doing the process on their own. 41 respondents said that they disagreed with doing self-checkouts while 21 respondents strongly disagreed, highlighting that although the majority of the customers were in favour of this practice, there is still a segment of customers which would prefer the help of the store for this process.

Similarly, the respondents of the survey showed that one of the biggest advantages of digitalization that allows them to shop online rather than visiting the stores allows them to complete the process is slowly becoming more favourable for the customers. However, it is still not a practice that would be adopted by all customers as many respondents believed that they would still like to have their shopping experience in a traditional way by physically visiting the stores and checking the products before they purchase them. 102 respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that they would like to make their

purchases online rather than visiting the stores, while 81 respondents believed that they would like to visit the stores and were still not comfortable completely with the idea to make their purchases online. 67 respondents, which represents approximately 27 percent of the total sample size were still undecided and did not agree or disagree with the statement, which shows that there is still a big segment of the customers who still do not have a preference when it comes to online shopping or the traditional way of shopping.

When the retailers were asked whether the rise e-commerce in retail outlets has led to a drastic change in the number of the customers being physically present in the stores for shopping, they believed that although the change has been there and the customers have now been shopping online, the change has not been very drastic, and a lot of customers still prefer to do their shopping by being physically present in the store. Although the general believe is that this will continue to change in the future as mostly the customers who are comfortable with using technology and shopping online belong to the youth while the older customers still prefer to do their shopping in the stores, there will always be a requirement for shopping in the physical stores. They also believe that there are several customers who believe in using both the channels and do their shopping in physical stores as well as order products online when they need them.

The retailers also highlighted that one of the primary reasons for a rise in e-commerce and online shopping was the Covid-19 pandemic which led to a lot of customers making their purchases online as people did not prefer to go outside and tried to avoid the stores due to them being crowded. However, after the initial days of the pandemic, the shopping behavior of customers is now returning to a normal state as more customers are now visiting the stores. An important point to note however is that as during the Covid-19 many customers were preferring to do their shopping online through e-commerce channels, it led to a lot of customers who were initially hesitant in doing their shopping online to use and become familiar with these channels. This also allowed the retailers to streamline their

online shopping and e-commerce channels as the Covid- 19 pandemic brought in more traffic to their websites as well as brought more orders to their online channels than ever before thus allowing them to test and then make the overall process better than before.

4.6 Future of the Retail Industry

4.6.1 Introduction

Most of the experts who have been present in the retail industry in the UK believe that the shift in the industry due to the digitalization will continue to gain momentum with a majority of the consumers already present on the digital channels. With time, newer and better technology will come and make the process of digitalization much better leading to a more drastic and bigger change in the industry in the UK. E-commerce and online shopping are already present at much larger scale with more customers now looking to make their purchases through websites and applications rather than visiting the stores physically and with time this pattern will increase as consumers now are comfortable with the idea of staying at their home and getting the products that they want to be delivered at their home.

4.6.2 Findings

As per one of our experts, by the year 2030 almost 85 percent of the purchases will be done online which would lead to a of retail chains closing their outlets and only being present online and delivering the products to the customers. This would be a huge shift from the current dynamics of the retail industry as physical stores and prime locations are considered to be a necessity for the customers. Another major change in terms of digitalization that has taken place and has been adopted by a vast number of customers is the use of self-checkout points at the retail outlets. Customers have now started using this technology which allows them to use bar codes on the products and allows them to check out

on their own rather than using a member of the staff of the store to complete this process for them.

Experts also predict that the use of store-based applications will assist the customers in the future with these applications helping them to find where the products are placed in the store and then allowing to be informed with any information that the store wants the customers to receive during their shopping visit. Currently, these applications are used by customers but not by a majority of the customers yet however experts feel that in the future this would be a platform that would be adopted and used by a majority of consumers. Similarly, the experts believe that the spread of information has been digitalized by most of the brands as they believe that the customers now are present on digital platforms and are more open to gaining information on those platforms. Traditionally, information such as discounts and promotions were present in the stores for the consumers in form of flyers and vouchers but now this information is present online as well. Experts believe that the information will now be completely online in the future. Similarly, loyalty cards are currently used in a traditional card form however digital cards are now believed to be the future of the retail outlets for the customers. This would allow the customers to redeem the points based on their shopping directly through their application which would make it easier for them to track their overall points which they can redeem.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the findings and analyse them in order to answer the research questions and hypotheses that are a part of the research.

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 Shift towards digital channels

There has been a large shift towards the consumers receiving information through digital mediums as compared to the previous practices where the customers were given information through traditional printed mediums. The hypothesis “Consumers have shifted to digital channels for information from retail outlets” holds true as during the course of the research, we saw that a majority of the consumers now rely on digital channels a source of information rather than traditional ones. Almost 60 percent of the respondents said that they do not read the paper version of the product offers anymore and 59 percent said that they always or often read the electronic version of these offers. Similarly, 74 percent of the respondents of the survey said that they follow the pages of retail outlets on social media, which shows that the customers are present on platforms where they can be given information through mediums which shows that now it is more effective when information is received and sent to customers through digital mediums as compared to traditional channels.

5.1.2 Rise of online shopping

With the rise of online shopping platforms now making it easier for customers to shop the products that they want has allowed a more convenient shopping experience for customers. The hypothesis “The rise of e-commerce platforms has led to a rise to customers shopping online in UK” can also be proven correct since the digitalization of the shopping platforms has led to more customers now saving time and shopping from home. 102 of the respondents from a total of 250 said that they prefer to do their shopping online while 81 said that they do not prefer online shopping. This shows that although the process of online shopping has now been preferred, not all customers are still comfortable with it.

5.1.3 Rise of digitization

The advancement in technology has led to a lot of changes in the overall retail industry in the UK. Customers have now adopted digital social media channels as their source of information instead of conventional channels while e-commerce purchases have also risen. Furthermore, some changes can be seen such as self-checkouts which are now present at almost all the major retail outlets which allow the customers to save time and makes it easier for them to complete the process of shopping. In the research, 155 out of 250 respondents believed that they are in favour of using self-checkouts which shows that this technology is already adopted by a majority of the customers and with time more customers in UK will look to adopt if they believe that it will make their shopping experience better. It can also be seen that more customers are looking to adopt digital loyalty cards as they believe that it will improve the quality of their shopping experience as a whole as it will allow them to monitor and then redeem their loyalty points and the benefits that they can avail from it digitally making it easier for them. 59.2 percent of the total customers of the survey agreed and strongly agreed to having and using digital loyalty cards, which shows that the customers are becoming more inclined towards the use of digital technology in order to make their overall process of shopping better and easier. The practices are also being analysed by the retailers who believe that this shift is now imminent and with time more customers will tend to shift a more digital retail shopping behavior and lead to rise in the digitalization process of the retail industry in the UK.

5.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be concluded based on the research that the process of digitalization has now impacted the retail industry in the UK and will also impact in the future as well. Retailers are also aware of this and now believe that a digital platform presence is now very important as this process will continue to impact the retail industry in the future as well. This is the perfect time for retail stores who are yet

to adopt digital practices to improve their presence. Not only do customers now prefer to get their information on the digital channels, they believe that the process of digitalization and advancement in the technology would allow a more convenient shopping experience for them. Experts believe that by 2030, most stores will lose their physical presence and improve their online presence which is why it is important for stores to focus on this as this would be major opportunity they would lose and allow their competitors to have a competitive advantage over them.

5.3 Limitations

This research was primarily focused on questionnaires and in order to collect and more data other means such as interviews and focus groups could have been conducted, however due to time limitations this could not be done. The sample size was also small and could also have been increased in order to make the sample size bigger.

5.4 Areas for future research

The research was focused on an overall perspective of digitalization in the retail industry in the UK. Future researches can be done with a focus on specific areas of retail industry such as e-commerce platforms, information sources, store-based applications.

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7. Appendix

7.1 Questionnaire – Customers

Demographics

1. What is your Gender
 Male Female
2. What is your age:
 Under 18 18-28 29-39 40-50 50+
3. What is your monthly household income?
 Under 10,000 pounds 10000-19,999 pounds 20,000-29,999 pounds
 30,000-39,999 pounds 40000+ pounds
4. What percentage of your monthly household income is spent on groceries?
 Less than 20% 21-30% 31-40% 41-50% 50%+

Shopping Patterns

1. I read the paper version of product offers.
 Never Rarely Often Always
2. I read the electronic version of the product offers.
 Never Rarely Often Always
3. I follow the pages of the retail outlets on social media.
 Never Rarely Often Always
4. I use digital channels to research for more information before I make a purchase.
 Never Rarely Often Always
5. I use digital channels to compare the product offers of different retail stores.
 Never Rarely Often Always
6. I use digital channels to compare prices of the product I want to purchase.
 Never Rarely Often Always
7. I use the store's smart applications during my shopping.

Never Rarely Often Always

Consumer Behavior

1. I would like to be sent promotional offers by stores.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. I would like to be sent discount coupons by stores.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I would like to have a digital loyalty card rather than a traditional one.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I would prefer to have self-checkouts at the stores in order to save time.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. I would prefer to make the payment for my shopping through an application rather than through credit cards.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. I would prefer to make the payment for my shopping through an application rather than through cash.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I would prefer to do my shopping online rather than visit the store.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

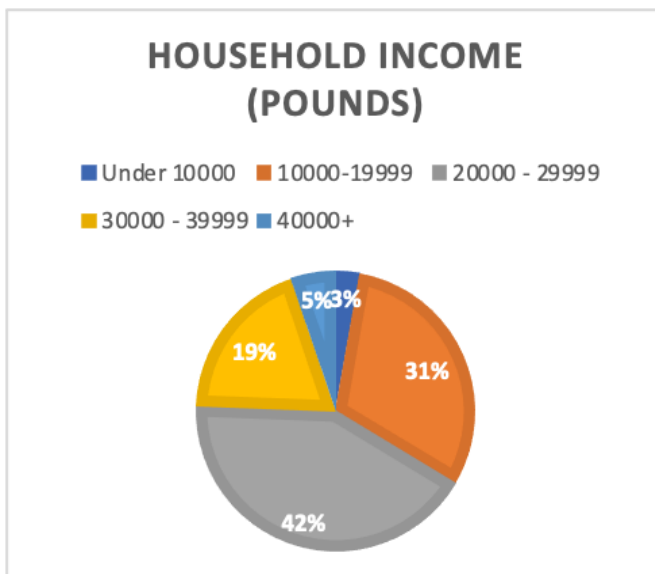
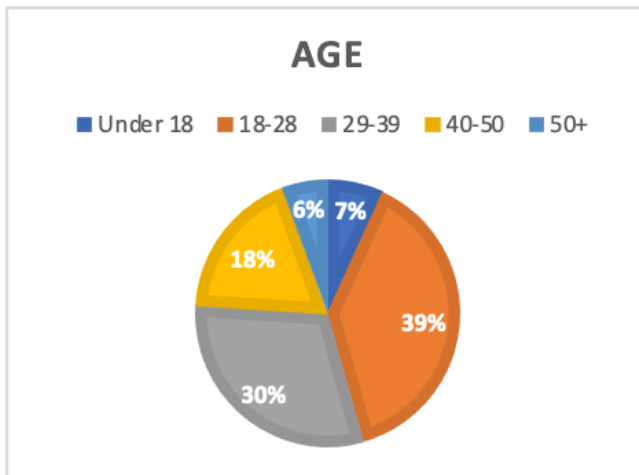
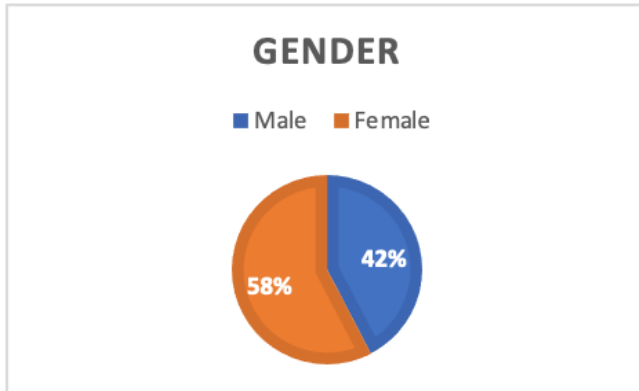
8. I would like to receive information digitally throughout my shopping visit.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7.2 Questionnaire – Retailers

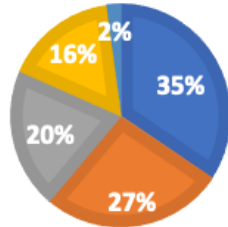
1. What are different digital channels that you use in order to approach and inform the customers?
2. What are the key pros and cons of using these channels to interact with the customers?
3. How have the customers reacted to using these channels?
4. How hard is the challenge is to remain at being the top-of-mind recall for customers since there is a lot of information for customers digitally nowadays?
5. What are different mediums of technology that can be used by customers to help them with purchases in your retail store?
6. Do you believe that the process of digitalization has improved the overall value provided to the customers?
7. Has the rise of e-commerce in the retail industry led to a drastic decrease in the number of customers being physically present in the stores?
8. How large was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your retail store and the overall retail industry globally?
9. How do you see the future of the retail industry?

7.3 Questionnaire Results - Charts



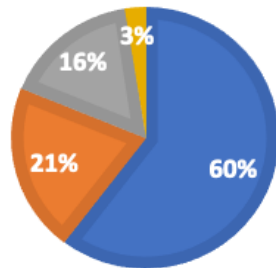
HOUSEHOLD INCOME SPENT ON GROCERIES (%)

■ Less than 20 ■ 21-30 ■ 31-40 ■ 41-50 ■ 50+



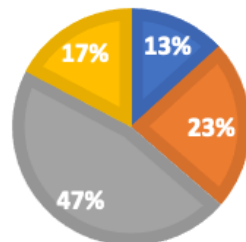
PAPER VERSION - PRODUCT OFFERS

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Often ■ Always



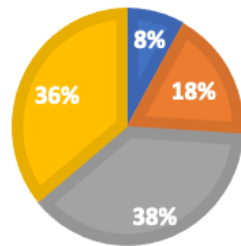
ELECTRONIC VERSION - PRODUCT OFFERS

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Often ■ Always



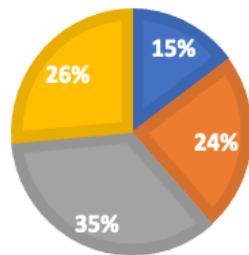
SOCIAL MEDIA

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Often ■ Always



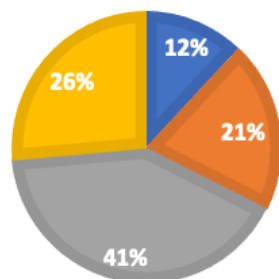
PRODUCT OFFERS

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Often ■ Always



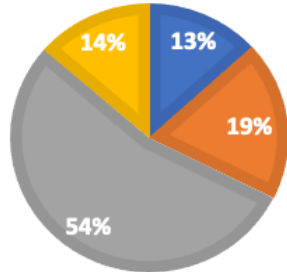
PRICE COMPARISON

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Often ■ Always



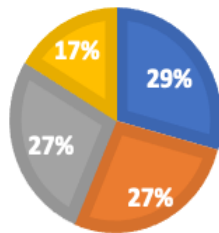
INFORMATION - DIGITAL CHANNELS

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Often ■ Always



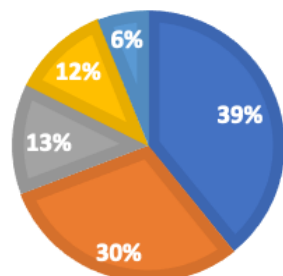
USAGE OF SMART APPLICATION

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Often ■ Always



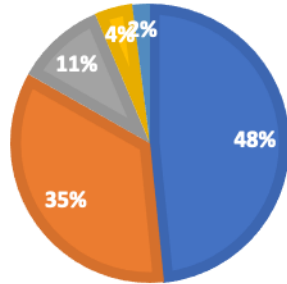
PROMOTIONAL OFFERS

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree
■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Disagree
■ Strongly disagree



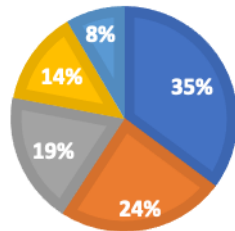
DISCOUNT COUPONS

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



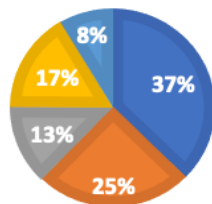
DIGITAL LOYALTY CARD

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



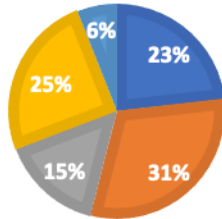
SELF-CHECKOUTS

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



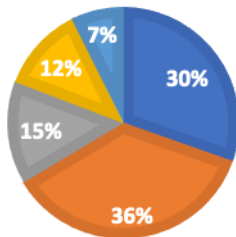
PAYMENT - AVOIDING CREDIT CARDS

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



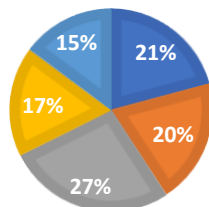
PAYMENT - AVOIDING CASH

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



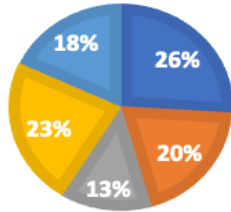
ONLINE SHOPPING

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



DIGITAL INFORMATION

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



7.4 Transcripts

Questionnaire – 1

Name: Emily White

Designation: Social Media Specialist

Organization: Aldi

1. What are different digital channels that you use in order to approach and inform the customers?

Answer: Google Ads, social media pages, websites

2. What are the key pros and cons of using these channels to interact with the customers?

Answer: Advantages are that the customers can now be informed and can communicate with us. Disadvantage is the clutter of information online.

3. How have the customers reacted to using these channels?

Answer: They find them easy to use and have an online presence

4. How hard is the challenge is to remain at being the top-of-mind recall for customers since there is a lot of information for customers digitally nowadays?

Answer: With all the brands being present and investing in marketing activities, it is tough

5. What are different mediums of technology that can be used by customers to help them with purchases in your retail store?

Answer: We have our product offers and prices on website and social media platforms

6. Do you believe that the process of digitalization has improved the overall value provided to the customers?

Answer: Yes

7. Has the rise of e-commerce in the retail industry led to a drastic decrease in the number of customers being physically present in the stores?

Answer: Yes

8. How large was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your retail store and the overall retail industry globally?

Answer: It led to a lot of customers making their purchases online due to the fear of the pandemic

9. How do you see the future of the retail industry?

Answer: A lot of digitalization and lot of newer online options for customers

Questionnaire – 2

Name: Elizabeth Wood

Designation: Assistant Manager - Marketing

Organization: Waitrose

1. What are different digital channels that you use in order to approach and inform the customers?

Answer: We use several channels, predominantly social media in order to make our customers more informed

2. What are the key pros and cons of using these channels to interact with the customers?

Answer: The biggest advantage I believe is now the customers can also raise their complaints and we can know them instantly. A disadvantage is that a bad experience posted can be believed by a lot of customers without checking.

3. How have the customers reacted to using these channels?

Answer: They find it easy and comfortable to use, especially the younger generation.

4. How hard is the challenge is to remain at being the top-of-mind recall for customers since there is a lot of information for customers digitally nowadays?

Answer: It is very tough with all the clutter

5. What are different mediums of technology that can be used by customers to help them with purchases in your retail store?

Answer: Our website would be the medium

6. Do you believe that the process of digitalization has improved the overall value provided to the customers?

Answer: Definitely, purchases can be made by customers without stepping out of their houses which I believe is a major value addition for customers.

7. Has the rise of e-commerce in the retail industry led to a drastic decrease in the number of customers being physically present in the stores?

Answer: I would not say the change has been drastic yet, but in the coming years it will be.

8. How large was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your retail store and the overall retail industry globally?

Answer: I believe this was the biggest change to impact the retail industry, and not just the retail industry but it impacted a lot of industries around the world.

9. How do you see the future of the retail industry?

Answer: I believe that by the year 2030, almost 85 percent of the purchases will be done online.

Questionnaire – 3

Name: Javeria Shah

Designation: Marketing Manager

Organization: Tesco

1. What are different digital channels that you use in order to approach and inform the customers?

Answer: For information, social media and website prove to be best for our customers

2. What are the key pros and cons of using these channels to interact with the customers?

Answer: Advantages – Interactive platforms, easy to send a lot of information

Disadvantages – Clutter of information, lack of attention to posts by customers

3. How have the customers reacted to using these channels?

Answer: The younger customers have adapted well; the older customers have found it harder

4. How hard is the challenge is to remain at being the top-of-mind recall for customers since there is a lot of information for customers digitally nowadays?

Answer: It is big challenge due to a lot of brands being present therefore the recall value is very low for most brands.

5. What are different mediums of technology that can be used by customers to help them with purchases in your retail store?

Answer: We use social media, website, application, advertisements, SEO.

6. Do you believe that the process of digitalization has improved the overall value provided to the customers?

Answer: It has improved the value for customers for sure, but it has made it harder for retailers.

7. Has the rise of e-commerce in the retail industry led to a drastic decrease in the number of customers being physically present in the stores?

Answer: In the future it could be a drastic change, however I believe that customers still are used to and enjoy the experience of visiting the stores so it is something that would be seen with time.

8. How large was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your retail store and the overall retail industry globally?

Answer: The impact was huge in the initial days with customers of course avoiding places however since we provide products that can be considered as a necessity people had to visit the stores. The impact was big but bigger on other industries.

9. How do you see the future of the retail industry?

Answer: It is very hard to predict, there would be a lot of online stores but at the same time physical stores and shopping will remain present.

Questionnaire – 4

Name: Rohail Abrahani

Designation: Digital Marketing Executive

Organization: Lidl

1. What are different digital channels that you use in order to approach and inform the customers?

Answer: Social media channels are used to provide information to the consumers in order to bring them to our other channels such as website/application to allow them to make a purchase.

2. What are the key pros and cons of using these channels to interact with the customers?

Answer: Attention span is a big problem, if an average customer follows 4 to 5 pages of retail outlets, he will not pay attention to the posts daily due to a clutter

3. How have the customers reacted to using these channels?

Answer: We make sure that these channels are easy to use for them and the reaction is good so far.

4. How hard is the challenge is to remain at being the top-of-mind recall for customers since there is a lot of information for customers digitally nowadays?

Answer: Very tough, not just for us but any industry that has a lot competition in terms of presence.

5. What are different mediums of technology that can be used by customers to help them with purchases in your retail store?

Answer: Websites

6. Do you believe that the process of digitalization has improved the overall value provided to the customers?

Answer: It depends on each brand; the main objective is to improve value to customers therefore some are able to do it successfully some are not. But in a general sense, customers have benefitted.

7. Has the rise of e-commerce in the retail industry led to a drastic decrease in the number of customers being physically present in the stores?

Answer: Yes, and a bigger change will be seen in the future.

8. How large was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your retail store and the overall retail industry globally?

Answer: There was a big change initially which was primarily due to the uncertainty but since a lot of customers started using online channels, they are now accustomed to it.

9. How do you see the future of the retail industry?

Answer: Online