# Fashion's Experiential Convergence: Reconceptualising the Physical Store Within Omnichannel Retailing as Experiential Retail Territories

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# Abstract

'Fashion's experiential convergence: reconceptualising the physical store within omnichannel retailing as Experiential retail territories' is a PhD by Published Work that comprises seven published papers, completed over a five year period, and an evaluative commentary. Taking a multidisciplinary approach, this body of work, integrates the theoretical antecedents of customer experience, the physical store (and its evolution), omnichannel retailing (physical and virtual places and their convergence), and retail in-store technologies, to offer a reconceptualisation of the physical store in the future. These theoretical antecedents are unified by taking a spatial perspective, essentially extending the territorology construct into the area of retailing, to propose original theorisation of customer-centric boundaryless Experiential retail territories.

The thesis contributes new knowledge both in the aggregated contribution of the papers themselves, as well as in their synthesis. Firstly, it chronicles retail types of places and spaces that enable and enhance experience (papers 1,2 and 3). Secondly, it posits temporal perspectives to customer experience management and the customer journey mediated by retail technologies (papers 4 and 5). Thirdly, it advances reimagined conceptions of the role of the physical store within omnichannel retailing (papers 6 and 7). And finally, in its synthesis, the thesis proposes Experiential retail territories as a novel conception in the prognosis of future retail from which two theoretical models that depict its nature, ensue. Firstly, a reimagined holistic retail experience characterisation is presented. Secondly, a retail territories continuum is conceptualised, as a depiction of integrated retail territories. Each circle representing a path on a continuum of convergence orientated towards physical or digital spheres with complete coalescence in the centre. In doing so, augmenting that retail territories are complex colliding, converging and conjunct spatialities and temporalities. Collectively, the two models encompass the fluidity, openness and mobility of retail territories.

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# 1. PhD by Published Work: chosen publications

This PhD by published work comprises seven publications, completed over a five-year period, which represent a personal disciplinary and methodological research journey. There is an inevitable chronological dimension to these publications but the topicality of the discipline means that this research journey is still emerging and ongoing, beyond the temporal boundaries of this thesis; consequently, an evolutionary perspective is adopted to structure this investigation of the experience of physical stores within an omnichannel retailing context, to offer a prognosis on the nature and role of the physical retail store in the future.

For all of the publications forming the body of work in this thesis, the researcher is the sole, or lead author (see Table 1). Supporting evidence is presented in appendix one, signed by each co-author where appropriate, while the citations of each publication, as of 24 November 2021, is provided in appendix two. The papers are presented as separate PDF files accompanying this analytical commentary.

*Table 1: Selected publications submitted for PhD by published works*

| Publication type | No. | Reference | Researcher's contribution to each publication |
|---|---|---|---|
| Book chapter (peer reviewed) | 1 | Alexander, B. and Kent, A. (2017) 'Retail Environments.' *In* Petermans, A., Kent, A. (eds.) *Retail Design*. Routledge Publishing, pp. 62-86. ISBN: 9781472467836. | Research design, data collection/ analysis 50%. Write up 80% |
| Academic journal article | 2 | Alexander, B. (2019) 'Commerce, culture and experience convergence: fashion's third places', *Journal of Services Marketing*, 33(3), pp. 257-272. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-04-2018-0116 | Research design, data collection/ analysis. Write up 100% |
| Book chapter (peer reviewed) | 3 | Alexander, B. and Olivares Alvarado, D. (2017) 'Convergence of physical and virtual retail spaces: the influence of technology on consumer in-store experience.' *In* Vecchi, A. (ed.) *Advanced Fashion Technology and Operations Management*. IGI Global, pp. 191-219. ISBN13: 9781522518655 Chapter DOI:10.4018/978-1-5225-1865-5.ch008 | Research design, data collection/ analysis 50%. Write up 100% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Academic journal article | 4 | Alexander, B. and Kent, A. (2021) 'Tracking technology diffusion in-store: a fashion retail perspective.' *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management,* 49(10), pp. 1369-1390. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-05-2020-0191 | Research design, data collection/ analysis, write up 75% |
| Academic journal article | 5 | Alexander, B. and Kent, A. (2020) 'Change in technology-enabled omnichannel customer experiences in-store.' *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*. (In press, available online 14 Oct 2020) https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102338 | Research design, data collection/ analysis, write up 75% |
| Book chapter (peer reviewed) | 6 | Alexander, B. and Blázquez Cano, M. (2019) 'Futurising the physical store in the omnichannel retail environment.' *In* Piotrowicz, W. and Cuthbertson, R. (eds.) *Exploring Omnichannel Retailing: Common expectations and diverse realities*. Springer Press, pp. 197-223. ISBN 978-3-319-98272-4. | Research design, data collection / analysis, write up 75% |
| Academic journal article | 7 | Alexander, B. and Blázquez Cano, M. (2019) 'Store of the future: towards a (re)invention and (re)imagination of physical store space in an omnichannel context.' *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 55, pp.1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.101913 | Research design, data collection/ analysis, write up 75% |

## 2. Introduction

The publications comprising this thesis anticipate and respond to scholarly calls for new research perspectives towards customer experience management, particularly in the context of retail places, channels and touchpoints (Grewal et al., 2009; Maklan and Klaus, 2011; Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2013; Bagdare, 2016; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Bustamante and Rubio, 2017; Grewal et al., 2017; Grewal et al., 2020; Hänninen et al., 2021). The thesis seeks to offer a reconceptualisation of the physical store within omnichannel fashion retailing, particularly in connection to the experiential dimensions of physical place and virtual space, and through their convergence, enabled and enhanced by retail technologies. Furthermore, the concept of Experiential retail territories introduced later in this analytical commentary, extends the territorology construct into the area of retailing (Brighenti, 2010; Kärrholm, 2012), thereby synthesising the body of work, and extending the thesis' theoretical contribution beyond the papers themselves.

### 2.1. Theoretical context

Schmitt and Zarantonello (2013) categorise 'experience' research into five distinct areas: *consumer experience* (e.g. Carbone and Haeckel, 1994; Schmitt, 1999, 2003; Arnold et al., 2002), *offline and online experience* (e.g. Kotler, 1973; Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Bitner, 1992; Turley and Milliman, 2000; Bäckström and Johansson, 2006; Verhoef et al., 2009) *consumption experience* (e.g. Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), *service experience* (e.g. Helkkula, 2011) and *brand experience* (e.g. Pine and Gilmore 1998; Schmitt, 1999; Brakus et al., 2009; Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2013; Khan and Rahman 2015a). Whilst acknowledging the growing field, Schmitt and Zarantonello criticise the lack of integration across contexts, leading to narrow and singular perspectives and call for future research to take a multidisciplinary and holistic approach, which this thesis aims to fulfil.

Whilst practices of experiential *retailing* are widespread (Pine and Gilmore, 1998, 1999, 2019; Gilmore and Pine, 2002; Schmitt, 2003; Kim et al., 2007; Mikunda, 2007; Lemon 2016; Briedis et al., 2020), scholarly attention to the phenomenon arguably remains

underdeveloped (Verhoef et al., 2009; Bagdare and Jain, 2013; Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2013; Khan and Rahman, 2015a; Bustamante and Rubio, 2017), especially in relation to the changing role and configuration of physical retail, and from a dynamic, omnichannel perspective (Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Botschen and Wegerer, 2017; Hagberg et al., 2017) the customer experience journey (Berry et al., 2002; Bagdare, 2016; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Ieva and Ziliani, 2018; Grewal et al., 2020; Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020) and the facilitation of customer experience through in-store technologies over-time (Grewal et al., 2020; Hoyer et al., 2020). Moreover, retail experience research predominantly focuses on the antecedents of in-store experience (e.g. Grewal et al., 2009; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2009; Bagdare, 2013), its consequences (e.g. Bitner, 1992; Baker et al., 2002; Babin et al., 2003; Arnold et al., 2005; Andreu et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2006; Ballantine et al., 2010; Brun et al., 2017; Prentice et al., 2019), and more recently, the need for a holistic approach towards customers' experience (Verhoef et al., 2009; Maklan and Klaus, 2011; Petermans et al., 2013; Spence et al., 2014; Ballantine et al., 2015; Sachdeva and Goel, 2015). However, in this literature, studies dedicated to digitally enhanced customer-centric experiences in-store have been criticised as being lacking (Khan and Rahman, 2015b; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Biswas, 2019; Alexander and Blázquez Cano, 2019, see paper 7) and scarce within the fashion industry (Khan and Rahman 2015a; Varshneya et al., 2017; Colombi et al., 2018; Mosquera et al., 2018; Lynch and Barnes, 2020). Therefore, this thesis seeks to fill this scholarly lacuna as indicated in the contribution to knowledge, articulated in section 2.5.

## 2.2. Industry context

The studies comprising this thesis take the fashion retail sector as their context. Globally, this sector is valued at USD $1,434bn (Euromonitor, 2021) and comprises footwear, men's, women's and children's clothing, sportswear, beauty, jewellery, accessories, luggage and bags and lingerie, across segments from 'value' to 'luxury' (Amed and Berg, 2020). It employs more than 300 million people worldwide across the value chain, ranks second in consumer goods globally (behind packaged food) in terms of industry value size and growth (Euromonitor, 2021) and would be the seventh-largest

economy if ranked against individual country GDP (Amed and Berg, 2020; Gazzola et al., 2020). Furthermore, as the fashion retail sector is recognised as being digitally innovative and experimental (Mosquera et al., 2018; Pantano and Vannucci, 2019; Lynch and Barnes, 2020), it is, therefore, a highly suitable context to explore the future of experiential retail places and spaces.

Before the COVID-19 global pandemic, many physical stores were already struggling, and consequently, a retail 'apocalypse' was predicted by some scholars (Helm et al., 2020; Paul and Rosenbaum, 2020). Indeed, the impact of COVID-19 has further destabilised the sector, with global retail sales declining by 19% in 2020 (Amed and Berg, 2020; Euromonitor, 2021), and by exacerbating and accelerating already existing trends towards online consumption. It is generally accepted that the clothing and footwear sector was among the worst affected by the pandemic, with physical store sales contracting by 29% year on year, due to measures such as lockdowns and social distancing, combined with the unprecedented growth of online fashion sales (Euromonitor, 2021). In 2020, global online retailing grew by 14.4% to USD1,819 billion as consumers shifted to purchasing online (GlobalData, 2020). It is posited that retailers who can reconceive their omnichannel approach to create a unique customer experience will recover faster (Briedis et al., 2020). Market volatility and transformation both pre-and - significantly - post-pandemic, arguably call for new (re)conceptualisations of physical retail within channel and touchpoint proliferation (Mende and Noble, 2019; Hoyer et al., 2020; Jocevski, 2020), which this thesis both acknowledges and investigates.

## 2.3. Personal context

On a personal basis, this thesis is the culmination of 32 years of studying, working in - and lecturing on - fashion retail management, particularly strategising and implementing retail brand experiences. My industry experience of creating customer experiences for retailers to strengthen brand engagement, drive differentiation and create value in a highly competitive fashion sector, informed my subsequent research interest in academia. My research outputs on customer experience both predate and

extend the body of work that constitute this thesis, with publications related to multisensorial retail experiences (Alexander and Heyd, 2014; Alexander and Nobbs, 2016; Alexander and Trigoni, 2019), retail format experiences, particularly pop-up stores (Alexander and Bain, 2016; Alexander et al., 2018) and digital experiences (Watson et al., 2018). A fascination with the physical store as the hub of customer experience connects most of my research work, but particularly the body of work that constitutes this thesis.

## 2.4. Body of work thematic linkages

The seven published works completed between 2017 and 2021 which comprise this thesis, can be broadly divided into three themes. Three of the papers (1,2 and 3) explore the ways in which customer experience has evolved from physical retail environments towards omnichannel retailing through channel convergence within a fashion context (Theme 1). Given the extent and speed of retail digitalisation, arguably rendering existing static, cross-sectional scholarly studies extraneous, the two further papers respond to the necessity for future research (as outlined in section 2.1), by taking a longitudinal lens to track change in technology types, interactivity, usability and customer experience within physical stores over time (papers 4 and 5 - constituting Theme 2). The final two papers (6 and 7) adopt a futures perspective to examine the purpose of the physical store within the transformed omnichannel environment and, specifically, aspects of the designed retail environment in optimising customer experience (Theme 3). In doing so, the conjoint themes (2 and 3) seek to critically evaluate theoretical convergence between customer experience, physical store evolution, and in-store technologies in realising omnichannel retailing to posit prognoses for the store of the future.  A schema of the interrelation between the publications is shown in Figure 1.

*Figure 1: Overview and interrelation of published works: themes 1-3*



1. Retail Environments, In *Retail Design*

2. Commercial, social and experiential convergence: Fashion's third places, *JSM*

3. Convergence physical and virtual retail spaces, In *Advanced Fashion Technology & Operations Management*

Theme 1

4. Tracking technology diffusion in-store, *IJRDM*

Theme 2

5. Change in technology enabled omnichannel customer experiences in-store, *JRCS*

6. Futurising the physical store in the omnichannel retail environment, In *Exploring Omnichannel Retailing*

Theme 3

7.Store of the future, *JRCS*

The body of work takes a multidisciplinary approach which seeks to integrate the theoretical antecedents of customer experience, the physical store (and its evolution), omnichannel retailing (i.e. physical and virtual places and their convergence), and retail in-store technologies (ISTs), which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. This is shown diagrammatically in Figure 2. Furthermore, these different theoretical antecedents are unified by taking a spatial perspective, through the development of the concept of 'retail territorology', to propose a reconceptualised model of customer-centric boundaryless Experiential retail territories, which is discussed in Chapter 5.

*Figure 2: Multidisciplinary literature informing the body of work*
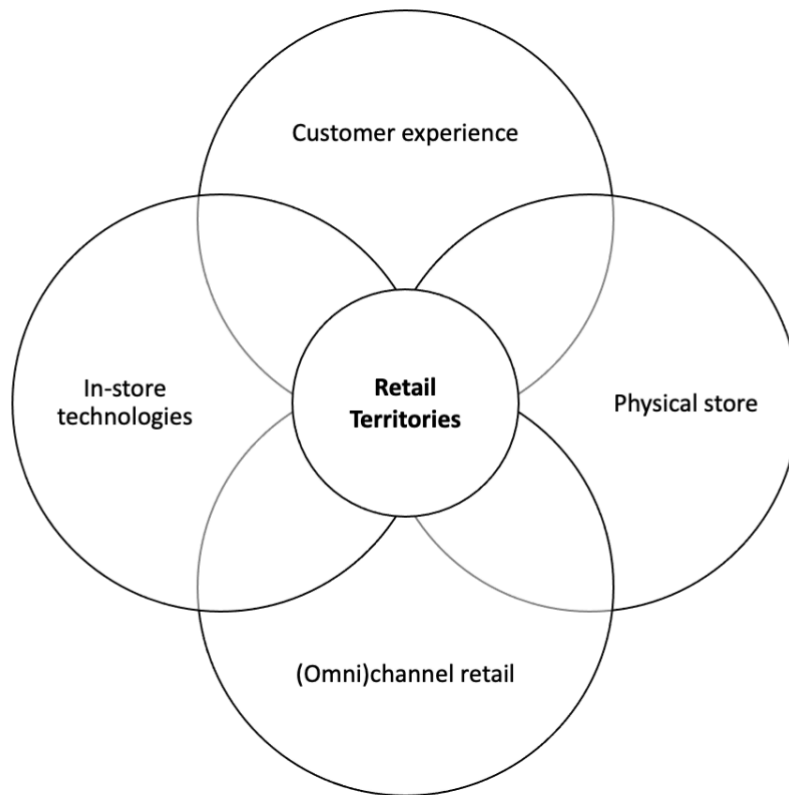
## 2.5. Contribution to knowledge

This thesis contributes new knowledge, both in the aggregated contributions of the individual papers - as well as in their synthesis in this commentary - in four key ways. First, by assessing chronologically the types of places and spaces that enable and enhance customer experience in fashion retail, specifically physical third places and converged place (where physical and virtual meet), an under-explored domain of study is identified (see Table 1, publications 1,2,3).

Second, the body of work found that customer experience management requires an understanding of the customer journey, facilitated by retail technologies and that this is dynamic and time-sensitive. However, there remains a dearth of studies on the topic (especially ones that take a temporal perspective to assess change), and which is particularly exiguous in the fashion field (publications 4,5).

Thirdly, given the unprecedented and destabilising speed of change within retail, facilitated by revolutionary technologies (and exacerbated by COVID-19), which is predicted to accelerate (Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020), scholars are challenged to move towards reimagined theorisations of interstitial retail spaces and places to anticipate change. However, more nuanced, phenomenological and futurological perspectives remain scarce in academic studies in the field. Thus, the publications in this body of work on the future role of the physical store within omnichannel retailing contribute to filling this research gap (publications 6,7).

Fourth, the summation of the papers in this commentary's synthesis takes a spatial perspective to offer new conceptions of retail territorology within customer-centric retail experiences.

Therefore, taking the multidisciplinary and holistic approach that underpins the body of work comprising this thesis, this analytical commentary aims to develop the three key themes of my research (outlined earlier) into reconceptualising the fashion physical store within omnichannel retailing from an experiential perspective, to position and expand my research within extant studies and, in synthesising the published work, to unite and conceptualise the variety of retail spatial contexts as Experiential retail territories.

In conclusion, this thesis explores the route taken to playing an active part in the research community and contributing to the domain of study, in which gaps in knowledge were identified, followed by a synthesis of these themes. The different perspectives of the papers and the methodologies are discussed and the contribution of the publications to the literature and their place within it are evaluated. Finally, the synthesis of the body of work proposes new theorisations on retail spatial contexts, expressed in terms of Experiential retail territories. Thus enriching the multiplicity of contribution in the aggregated papers themselves and in their synthesis.

# 3. Customer experience evolution in a fashion retail context: from mono- to omnichannel

"What people really desire are not products but satisfying experiences"
(Abbott, 1955:40).

Customer experience management has received extensive scholarly and practitioner attention over the past four decades and is increasingly seen as a strategic imperative for retailers (Verhoef et al., 2009; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Khan et al., 2020). Given the rapidly changing retail landscape, the need to understand, manage and offer better customer experiences is a priority for retailers and academics alike (Bustamante and Rubio, 2017; Mahr et al., 2019; Gartner, 2021). Yet, despite rapid advances in experiential research, in terms of construct and methods, further exploration is called for (Bagdare, 2013; Petermans et al., 2013; Sachdeva and Goel, 2015; Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Becker, 2018). A key element of this thesis relates to retail customer experience, and this chapter discusses its scholarly evolution, from mono-channel (physical store) to omnichannel (seamless integration across channels and touchpoints) contexts. In doing so, it highlights emerging trends in the literature, to incorporate a more holistic approach towards customer experience(s) (Verhoef et al., 2009; Ballantine et al., 2015; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Becker, 2018), moving from a provider- to consumer-centric perspective that focuses on the customer journey (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Becker and Jaakkola, 2020), from simple retailer-customer dyads to ecosystems (including other actors e.g. family, friends, influencers) involving multiple channels and touchpoints, with implications for the physical store (Addis and Holbrook, 2001; Heinonen et al., 2010; Akaka et al., 2015; Becker, 2018), and the increasing integration and use of technology in amplifying retail customer experience (Blázquez, 2014; Poncin and Mimoun, 2014). Consequently, this chapter takes an evolutionary rather than static perspective on experience and situates the papers comprising the body of work in this theoretical continuum. First, customer experience is defined and its theoretical developments are expounded. Next, the

evolutionary developments of customer experience within retail settings is explored and examined, from a focus on physical stores to their digital transformation from mono- to multi- then omnichannel retailing enabled through emergent retail technologies.

## 3.1. Definitions and conceptualisations of customer experience

Significant efforts have been made to define and conceptualise customer experience, yet the literature remains fragmented with a lack of consensus, both within academic silos as well as across multiple disciplines (Jain et al., 2017; Chevtchouk et al., 2021). Experience literature can be found in the fields of philosophy (e.g. Dewey, 1938), marketing and consumer research (e.g. Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Schmitt, 1999), cognitive science (e.g. Pinker, 1997), design science (e.g. Wright et al., 2003; Norman, 2004) and management practice (e.g. Pine and Gilmore, 1999), each assigning different meanings to the construct, with different conceptions and little integration (Petermans et al. 2013; Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2013). Most scholars agree that Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) were influential in viewing consumption from an experiential perspective, arguably instigating the scholarly stream of research on experience, but this research, it has been suggested, has lacked definitional consensus (Carù and Cova, 2003; Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2013).

Since then, scholars and practitioners have described the experience construct using a variety of terms and dimensions, relating to different contexts, including service, product, consumption, customer, brand and retail experience, as indicated in Table 2. These descriptions tend to overlap or be subsumed within each other, making delineation between terms ambiguous (Jain et al, 2017; Chevtchouk et al., 2021). Whilst all terms outlined in Table 2 share experience dimensions of cognition, behaviour and affect, few share sensorial dimensions and only 'customer experience' includes the social dimension. As the retail environment is seen as a setting where social interactions take place, the social context and thus the social dimension of customer experience is deemed important (Gentile et al, 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2008; Johnstone, 2012; De Kesyer et al., 2015).

*Table 2: Key terms, definitions, dimensions and authors in experience-based research*

| Term | Indicative definition | Dimensions | Other authors |
|---|---|---|---|
| Consumption experience | 'Consumption experience is seen as involving a steady flow of fantasies, feelings and fun. A subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses and esthetic criteria' (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982:132) | Cognitive Affective Behavioural | Mehrabian and Russell (1974); Donovan and Rossiter (1982); Hirschman and Holbrook (1982); Arnold and Price (1993); Holt (1995); Richins (1997); Turley and Milliman (2000); Addis and Holbrook (2001); Carù and Cova (2003); Joy and Sherry (2003); Alba and Williams (2012); Jantzen et al. (2012); Antéblian et al. (2013); Woodward and Holbrook (2013); Chaney et al. (2018) |
| Service experience | 'The cognitive, affective and behavioural reactions associated with a specific service event' (Padgett and Allen, 1997:52) | Cognitive Affective Behavioural | Bitner et al. (1997); Jones (1999); Froehle and Roth (2004); Grace and O'Cass (2004); Pullman and Gross (2004); Arnold et al. (2005); Patricio et al. (2008); Heinonen et al. (2010); Zomerdijk and Voss (2010); Brocato et al. (2012); Klaus and Maklan (2012); Juttner et al. (2013); Chandler and Lusch (2015); Jaakkola et al. (2015); Vargo and Lusch (2016); Voorhees et al. (2017); Bueno et al. (2019); Mahr et al. (2019); Roozen and Katidis (2019) |
| Product experience | 'Experience can be characterised as all the thoughts, emotions, activities, and appraisals that occur during or as a result of an event' (Goode et al. 2010:276) | Cognitive Affective Behavioural | Hoch and Ha (1986); Hoch (2002); Aurier and Guintcheva (2014); Berger et al. (2018) |
| Brand experience | 'Subjective, internal consumer responses that are evoked by brand-related experiential attributes when consumers search for, shop for, and consume brands' (Brakus et al. 2009:53) | Sensory Affective Intellectual Behavioural | Iglesias et al. (2011); Khan and Rahman (2015a, 2015b, 2016); Schmitt et al. (2015); Atwal and Williams (2017); Khan and Fatma (2017); Hepola et al. (2017); Saari and Mäkinen (2017); Andreini et al. (2018); Chevtchouk et al. (2021); Mondal and Chakrabarti (2021) |
| | 'Experiences are distinct economic offerings… an experience occurs where a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event' (Pine and Gilmore, 1998:97-98) | Memorable Personal Entertainment Educational Escapist Aesthetic | |
| Retail experience | 'Retail customer experience is the sum total of cognitive, emotional, sensorial and behavioural responses produced during | Cognitive Emotional Sensorial Behavioural Joy | Baker et al. (1992); Jones (1999); Babin and Attaway (2000); Andreu et al. (2006); Bäckström and Johansson (2006); Healy et al. (2007); Naylor et al. (2008); Jones et al. (2010); |

| | | Mood<br>Leisure<br>Distinctive | Bäckström (2011); Bagdare (2013); Bagdare and Jain (2013); Bagdare (2015); Bäckström and Johansson (2017); Triantafillidou et al. (2017); Grewal and Roggeveen (2020) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | the entire process, involving an integrated series of interactions with people, objects, processes and environment in retailing' (Bagdare and Jain, 2013:792) | | |
| Customer/ consumer experience | 'Experiences provide sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational values that replace functional values' (Schmitt, 1999:57) | Sensory (sense),<br>Affective (feel),<br>Cognitive (think)<br>Physical (act)<br>Social (relate) | Carbone and Haeckel (1994); Novac et al. (2000); Berry et al. (2002); Gilmore and Pine (2002); Shaw and Ivens (2002); Schmitt (2003); Frow and Payne (2007); Gentile et al. (2007); Meyer and Schwager (2007); Grewal et al. (2009); Puccinelli et al. (2009); Rose et al. (2012); Maklan and Klaus (2011); Klaus and Maklan (2013); Petermans et al. (2013); Schmitt and Zarantonello (2013); Andajani (2015); Sachdeva and Goel (2015); Bilgihan et al. (2016); Stein and Ramaseshan (2016); Schmitt et al. (2015); Yakhlef (2015); Hwang and Seo (2016); Lemon (2016); Parise et al. (2016); Bustamante and Rubio (2017); Jain et al. (2017); Varshneya et al. (2017); Becker and Jaakkola (2020); Khan et al. (2020); Roggeveen et al. (2020) |
| | 'A multidimensional construct, which is holistic in nature and involves the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer' (Verhoef et al. 2009:32) | Cognitive<br>Affective<br>Emotional<br>Physical<br>Social | |
| | 'A multidimensional construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial and social responses to a firm's offering during the customer's entire purchase journey' (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016:71) | Cognitive<br>Emotional<br>Sensorial<br>Behavioural<br>Social | |

(author's own)

Thus, for sake of clarity, this analytical commentary draws on the broadest definition and dimensions by using the term customer experience. Defined as the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer (Verhoef et al., 2009:32). It is holistic, interactional and multidimensional in nature and marked by level of uniqueness, from the ordinary to extraordinary (Carù and Cova, 2003; Verhoef et al., 2009; De Keyser et al., 2015).

Customer experience and its *management* have gained prominence as a subject for research inquiry. Many scholars have emphasised the importance of managing the total customer experience across the purchase journey to create value, competitive advantage, improve customer satisfaction and loyalty (e.g. Schmitt, 2003; Gentile et al.,

2007; Grewal et al., 2009). Customer experience management (CEM) involves systematically designing, orchestrating and measuring the customer's entire experience (Carbone and Haeckel, 1994; Berry et al., 2002; Hwang and Seo, 2016), and has become a strategic priority for retailers as a key determinant of success (Frow and Payne, 2007; Verhoef et al., 2009; De Kesyer et al., 2015).

## 3.2. Physical retail: in-store customer experience

Many conceptions and discussions of customer experience until the 1990s were primarily focused on the physical retail store, specifically store design, in effecting purchasing behaviours (Hänninen et al., 2021). Hirschman and Holbrook's (1982) seminal study defined hedonic consumption as those facets of consumer behaviour that relate to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of consumption in-store (Bäckström and Johansson, 2006). In contrast with the long-focused view on utilitarian aspects of the shopping experience, based on task-related, rational product purchases (Babin et al., 1994), hedonic consumption is driven by fun, entertainment and enjoyment (Jones, 1999; Alba and Williams, 2012). Marking a shift from generic experience construct development (discussed in section 3.1) to the retailing context more specifically, a myriad of retail customer experience theorisations have followed, focusing on the dimensions that influence customer experience and behaviours in-store (e.g. Baker et al., 2002; Bäckström and Johansson, 2006; Grewal et al., 2009; Vehoef et al., 2009). According to Bäckström and Johansson, (2017), these comprise:

- *Personal dimensions*, including consumer shopping motivation, attitude, mood and involvement (e.g. Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Babin and Darden 1995; Tauber, 1995; Spies et al., 1997; Mathwick et al., 2001; Soars, 2003) as well as gender and financial means (Jones, 1999);
- *Retail dimensions*, including store design, atmospherics, social aspects, service and price (e.g. Turley and Milliman, 2000; Baker et. al., 2002; Grewal et al., 2009; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2009);
- *Situational dimensions*, including the type of store, season and culture (Verhoef et al., 2009; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017);
- *Macro-level dimensions,* including economic and political (Grewal et al., 2009).

Over the years extensive scholarly attention has been given to personal and retail-related dimensions in-store, especially in relation to hedonic and utilitarian consumption value, with particular emphasis given to the former (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Babin et al., 1994; Jones, 1999), and to atmospherics, referring to tangible and intangible in-store cues that can be designed or altered in order to create emotional and behavioural consumer responses (Kotler, 1973; Puccinelli et al., 2009). Kotler (1973) advanced the notion that the place where the product is purchased was a significant feature in consumption experience, arguably more important than the product itself on influencing how people react and act (Bitner, 1992). This paved the way for numerous studies on overall store atmospheric elements and their role (e.g. Baker, 1987; Bitner, 1992; Babin and Attaway, 2000; Turley and Milliman, 2000; Ballantine et al., 2010; Krishna, 2012; Bagdare, 2013; Spence et al., 2014; Sachdeva and Goel, 2015), as well as the effects of specific atmospheric (sensory) elements such as *sight cues* (e.g. Bellizzi and Hite, 1992; Halsted, 1993; Babin et al., 2003; van Rompay et al. 2012; Reynolds-McIlnay et al., 2017), *sound cues* (e.g. Milliman, 1982; Garlin and Owen, 2006; Morin et al., 2007; Jain and Bagdare, 2011; Knoferle et al., 2012, 2017; Biswas et al., 2014), *touch cues* (Krishna et al., 2010; Martin, 2011; Hultén, 2012), *smell cues* (e.g. Spangenberg et al., 1996; Madzharov et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2018) and *taste cues* (e.g. Lindstrom, 2005; Hultén, 2009; Rodrigues et al., 2011; Weidmann et al., 2013).

Here, the retailers' service experience was recognised as being crucial in seeking to control and add materiality to the abstract nature of in-store atmosphere, thereby positively influencing consumers' product and service evaluation (Hoffman and Turley, 2002; Bäckström and Johansson, 2006). This approach to the physical environment was coined as the 'servicescape' (Bitner, 1992), with more recent expanded conceptions as the 'experiencescape', (O'Dell, 2005) describing places where human interactions, pleasure, entertainment and enjoyment occur (Tresidder and Deakin, 2019; Tasci and Pizam, 2020). Research into store atmosphere concludes that positive retail environmental features influence consumers' subjective experience, especially pleasure and arousal and leads to approach behaviours, for example, increasing dwell time,

money spent, impulse purchasing, merchandise value and patronage intention while improving consumer relationships and customer experience (e.g. Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Babin and Attaway, 2000; Baker et al., 2002; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2009).

However, whilst contributing to our initial understanding of customer experience in retail, these early studies arguably fail to fully acknowledge the more holistic aspects of customer experience and how consumers experience and interact with retail environments (Bäckström and Johansson, 2017) in five key ways.

First, they fail to fully consider the social dimension of the servicescape or more holistic approaches to in-store experience (Verhoef et al., 2009; Spence et al., 2014; Ballantine et al., 2015). Interactionally, customer experience derives from human (e.g. employees, other consumers) and non-human (e.g. self-service technologies) interfaces. However, without an interaction, there is nothing to experience (De Keyser et al., 2015; Biswas, 2019), yet the retail environment's social nature has received less attention (Rosenbaum, 2006; Johnstone and Conroy, 2006; Johnstone, 2012; Alexander, 2019, see paper 3). Indeed, many recent scholars support Verhoef et al.'s (2009) contention that customer experience is holistic in nature, involving multiple dimensions, whilst acknowledging its subjective nature, and call for further empirical studies that take an interconnected approach (e.g. Petermans et al., 2013; Sachdeva and Goel, 2015; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017). Contributing to this view, the research on fashion's third places (paper 2) discusses third place, defined in terms of "a setting beyond home or work" (the first and second places respectively) (Oldenburg, 1989:2), within the realm of experiential servicescape, arguing that fashion consumers demand immersive experiences that engage them on an emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual level (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Kim et al., 2007). It explores the notion of physical place as co-created experience (Rosenbaum, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2008) and in doing so, diverges from the dominant atmospheric literature on aspects of the servicescape that engender customer experience (for a full synopsis, see chapter 4).

Second, customer experience is now no longer limited to the customer's interaction in-store but is impacted by a combination of experiences that evolves over time, across channels during the purchase journey (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017). With growth in digital channels, novel ways of organising the physical store are necessary and require investigation (Bell et al., 2014; Grewal et al., 2017, 2018; Gauri et al., 2021); however, empirical consumer and retailer perspectives on this remain scarce (Bäckström and Johansson, 2017).

Third, customer experience is dynamic, with past and current experience, impacting future experience, yet the dynamics of customer experiences over time has also received little attention in retailing research (Verhoef et al., 2009; De Keyser et al., 2015).

Fourth, the use of technology in-store has been accepted as influencing customer experiences, with recent scholars referring to it as an important atmospheric tool (Blázquez, 2014; Poncin and Mimoun, 2014) and responsible for propelling omnichannel capabilities (Herhausen et al., 2015; Cai and Lo, 2020) in the past 10 years, which is absent from early theorisations. The way people experience retail is being transformed through technologies and the lines between human and machine becoming increasingly blurred (Lemon, 2016; Jocevski, 2020).

Fifth, prior studies focus on retailer-customer dyads, thereby arguably failing to reflect the complex, multidimensional, multi-channel and touchpoint nature of today's customer experience retail ecosystem. This is where traditional views on customer experience in retail environments that focus on atmospherics, and more recent conceptions diverge (De Keyser et al., 2015; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Roggeveen et al., 2020). Current scholars recognise the shift from provider- (i.e. retailer control) to consumer-centric conceptions of customer experience, that takes place as part of a longer journey, across different channels, arguably, impacting on the relevance of earlier studies in the context of today's omnichannel retail environment (Becker, 2018; Becker and Jaakkola, 2020; Roggeveen et al., 2020). This paradigm shift reflects

Vargo and Lusch's (2004) notion of co-creating value collaboratively with customers over an extended time frame. This embodies an evolution of retailing beyond products, services, and post services to the most important expression of the retailscape - customer experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, 2004; Maklan and Klaus, 2011). The move from mono-physical store to omnichannel convergence and customer experience is discussed next.

### 3.3. The digitalisation of retail customer experience: convergence online and offline

Over the past three decades, retailing has radically transformed due to digitalisation. The role of the physical store has changed from a place of transaction to a showroom and a place to interact, as the emergence and development of online retailing has enabled different and more meaningful customer experiences (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013; Hänninen et al., 2021). Consequently, conceptual and empirical retail research on customer experience has grown (e.g. Bolton et al., 2018; Paul and Rosenbaum, 2020; Chevtchchouk et al., 2021). Huuhka et al. (2014) and Hänninen et al (2021) offer a cogent synthesis of the evolution of retailing over the past three decades (see Figure 3), from mono physical channel to multi- then omnichannel retailing precipitated by advances in information and communication technology, broadly falling into three phases.

*Figure 3: Chronology of retail evolution from physical to omnichannel: 1970-present*

First phase
1970s-mid-1990s:
Physical store research and
practice dominance

Second phase
2000-2010:
Online growth rebounded.
Studies focused on understanding
online customer behaviours,
multichannel retailing & channel
specific studies, online and offline

Third phase
2011-present:
Shift from multichannel to
omnichannel, importance of
seamless customer experience
across purchase journey; studies
on cause / effect digitalisation,
technology advances,
omnichannel retailing

Mid-1990s-1999:
Ecommerce emergence,
adoption of technology and
Internet

2000-2004:
dotcom crash, triggering
temporary online slowdown

2009-2014:
CX and CY management
gained scholarly &
practitioner attention e.g.
understanding how to
harness / integrate offline /
online channels and social
media and mobile
technology touchpoints

Author's own: based on Huuhka et al. (2014) and Hänninen et al. (2021)

### 3.3.1.   Phase 1: 1990s - siloed channel proliferation

E-commerce burgeoned in the mid-1990s as retailers used information and
communication technology and the internet, transforming buying behaviours and
business processes (e.g. Reynolds, 2000; Grewal et al., 2009; Gerea et al., 2021;
Hänninen et al., 2021). This channel shift destabilised traditional retailing, with the
acceleration of e-commerce reducing the customer's need to visit a physical store. The
term "marketspace" was coined to depict the real-time interactivity and global
connectivity realised by the internet (Dutta et al., 1998).

### 3.3.2.   Phase 2: 2000-2010 - rise of multichannel - retailer centric

Multichannel retailing dominated practitioner and academic attention during this
period, yet inconsistencies in both definitions and characteristics led to confusion in its
progressive conceptualisation - with emerging terms like multi-, cross-, and
omnichannel retailing (Picot-Coupey et al., 2016). It is generally accepted that
multichannel retailing refers to the design, deployment, coordination, and evaluation of
different channels (i.e. online, offline etc.), yet with siloed structures and no integration
or synergistic management of them (Neslin et al., 2006; Rigby, 2011; Gallino and
Moreno 2014). Multichannel became superfluous when the same customers were using

more than one channel. Moreover, with the proliferation of channels, issues of definitional delineation, integration, coordination and synergies became paramount (Herhausen et al., 2015; Picot-Coupey et al., 2016; Cai and Lo, 2020). Channel integration is defined as the degree to which different channels interact with each other (Bendoly et al., 2005), which is conceived as a continuum, based on level of integration intensity - from none (multichannel) to partial (cross-channel) to full (omnichannel) (Lewis et al., 2014; Picot-Coupey et al., 2016). Given the often overlapping channel conceptions and meanings, which has caused confusion (Picot-Coupey et al., 2016; Yrjölä et al., 2018a; Hu and Tracogna, 2020), Table 3 presents a synthesis of the main theoretical contributions in the field of retailing, arranged by thematic classification and temporal channel evolution from multi- cross- to omnichannel.  Whilst it can occur from offline to online or from online to store, the focus of this thesis is the offline; that is, the physical store providing access to, knowledge and experience of the online store and digital touchpoints (Herhausen et al., 2015).

*Table 3: Theoretical evolution: from multi- to omnichannel retailing*

| Theme | Multi- channel 2000+ | Cross- channel 2005+ | Omni- channel 2011-present |
|---|---|---|---|
| Concept development | Berman and Thelen (2004); Neslin et al. (2006); Sousa and Voss (2006) | Chatterjee (2010) | Rigby (2011); Levy et al. (2013); Bell et al. (2014); Beck and Rygl (2015); Hansen and Sia (2015); Chopra (2016); Rey-Moreno and Medina-Molina (2016); Ailawadi and Farris (2017); Chen et al. (2018); Galipoglu et al. (2018); von Briel (2018); Ye et al. (2018); Cai and Lo (2020); Mahadevan and Joshi (2021); Mishra et al. (2021) |
| Channel management / integration | Otto and Chung (2000); Schoenbachler and Gordon (2002); Payne and Frow (2004); Balasubramanian et al. (2005); Bendoly et al. (2005); Tate et al. (2005); Verhoef et al. (2007); Kwon and Lennon (2009); Yan et al. (2010); Chiu et al. (2011); Herhausen et al. (2015); Pauwels and Neslin (2015); Hossain et al. (2019) | Chatterjee (2006); Falk et al. (2007); Brynjolfsson et al. (2009); Lee and Kim (2010); Schramm-Klein et al. (2011); Avery et al. (2012); Lewis et al. (2014); Cao and Li (2015); Huang et al. (2016) | Pawar and Sarmah (2015); Cummins et al. (2016); Picot-Coupey et al. (2016); Huré et al. (2017); Park and Lee (2017); Rodriguez-Torrico et al. (2017); Saghiri et al. (2017); Sopadjieva et al. (2017); Bell et al. (2018b); Cao and Li (2018); Hosseini et al. (2018); Shen et al. (2018); Wiener et al. (2018); Yrjölä et al. (2018a/b); Zhang et al. (2018); Jocevski et al. (2019); Alexander and Blázquez Cano (2019); Tyrväinen and Karjaluoto, (2019); Xu and |

| | | | Jackson (2019); Quach et al. (2020); Gao et al. (2021) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Consumer behaviour / customer journey | McGoldrick and Collins (2007); Schröder and Zaharia (2008); Kwon and Jain (2009); Gensler et al. (2012); Wolny and Charoensuksai (2014); Melis et al (2015); Pantano and Viassone (2015); Rapp et al. (2015); Bèzes (2016); Hu and Tracogna (2020); Jo et al. (2020) | Piercy (2012); Heitz-Spahn (2013); Cao (2014) | Juaneda-Ayensa et al. (2016); Gao and Su (2017); Barwitz and Maas (2018); Kazancoglu and Aydin (2018); Larke et al. (2018); Mosquera et al. (2018); Kang (2019); De-Borba et al. (2020); Lee (2020); Lynch and Barnes (2020); Mishra et al. (2021); Sahu et al. (2021); Tueanrat et al. (2021) |
| Retail strategy | Brnyjolfsson and Smith (2000); Rangaswamy and van Bruggen (2005); Neslin and Shankar (2009); Zhang et al. (2010); Hübner et al. (2016) | | Brynjolfsson et al. (2013); Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson (2014); Lazaris and Vrechopoulos (2014); Verhoef et al. (2015); Hagberg et al. (2017); Huré et al. (2017); Berman and Thelen (2018); Shen et al. (2018); Yrjölä et al. (2018b); Savastano et al. (2019) |
| Customer experience | Burke (2002); Jones and Runyan (2013); Blázquez (2014); Alexander and Alvarado (2017) | | Bhalla (2014); Cook (2014); Hoepner et al. (2015); Blakeney (2016); Melero et al. (2016); Mirsch et al. (2016); Ieva and Ziliani (2018); Tyrväinen and Karjaluoto (2019); Hickman et al. (2020); Shi et al. (2020) |

(author's own)

Scholarly retail studies during this phase shifted to understanding online customer behaviour, the emergence of multichannel retailing conceptions (Mathwick et al., 2001; Arnold and Reynolds, 2003; Verhoef et al., 2009) as well as channel specific studies, offline (e.g. Sweeney and Soutar, 2001) or online (e.g. Childers et al., 2001; Ahn et al., 2007). Simultaneously, customer experience and customer experience management gained increasing interest from scholars and practitioners alike, with growing realisation of the importance of channel and touchpoint convergence across the customer journey, in enhancing customer experience (e.g. Verhoef et al., 2009; Grewal et al., 2009; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Verhoef et al, 2015; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Becker, 2018; Hänninen et al., 2021); its significance giving rise to a special issue on retail customer experience in the *Journal of Retailing* in 2009.

The growing importance of the customer experience construct was indicated by the increasing number of scholarly publications between 2012-2014, as indicated in Table 2, yet most were limited to quantitative enquiry, covering aspects of antecedents, measurement and consequences of consumer experience (e.g. Bagdare, 2013; Bagdare and Jain, 2013; Khan and Rahman, 2015a, 2016; Bueno et al., 2019). Verhoef et al's (2009) earlier customer experience definition was extended to reflect the onus on the purchase journey, as a "multidimensional construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social response to a firm's offering during the customer's entire purchase journey" (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016:71).

Customer experience continued to be recognised as strategically important, with greater attention given to understanding how retailers could best harness and integrate their offline and online channels during this period (Cachon and Lariviere, 2005; Rigby, 2011; Brynjolfsson et al., 2013; Bustamante and Rubio, 2017; Huré et al., 2017). Retailers experienced the advantages of blending offline and online retailing in the pursuit of integrated retail - that is, the benefits of uniting services of accessibility and assortment with personal inspection and immediate gratification (Badrinarayanan et al., 2012; Herhausen et al., 2015).

### 3.3.3. Phase 3: 2011-today - rise of omnichannel - customer centric

By the mid-2010s, traditional physical stores started to see declining footfall as consumer purchase behaviours shifted and, conventional retailers were errant in not embracing newer digital ways of driving consumers to the store (e.g. via social media), whilst increased use of new interaction touchpoints, specifically social media and mobile technology, continued to challenge and change the retail customer experience (Ailawadi and Farris, 2017; Ieva and Zilani, 2018; Larke et al., 2018). By the late-2010s, the online channel was firmly entrenched in retailing, and academic and practitioner theorisations of multichannel had been widely displaced by omnichannel retailing, as retailers acknowledged the need to offer a seamless customer experience across the purchase journey, regardless of channel (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Sopadjieva et al., 2017; Tyrväinen and Karjaluoto, 2019; Mahadevan and Joshi, 2021). Rigby's (2011:4)

first practitioner-oriented definition of omnichannel retailing as, "an integrated sales experience that melds the advantages of physical stores with the information-rich experience of online shopping", was pioneered by scholars Brynjolfsson et al. (2013) and Bell et al. (2014) by taking retailer competitive advantage and customer-focused perspectives, paving the way for burgeoning areas of further research in the domain (Cai and Lo, 2020; Hickman et al., 2020; Mishra et al. 2021, see Table 3).

Growing capabilities and the significance of smartphones has accelerated the implementation of omnichannel strategies by retailers (Ailawadi and Farris, 2017). Consequently, as consumers have become accustomed to using different channels in their 'journey', so they are influenced by behavioural, cognitive and emotional factors and interactions (Verhoef et al., 2015; Grewal and Roggeveen, 2020). In this scenario, traditional retailers are shifting from a "bricks and mortar" to a "bricks and clicks" format by adopting multiple touchpoints to communicate and transact with customers (Hübner et al., 2016; Jocevski, 2020). Whilst advances have been made in our understanding of customer experience management, within the customer journey and decision stages (pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase), ongoing consideration is required, specifically on the nonlinearity of the purchase journey, with consumers jumping between stages and channels, and each shaped by contextual, environmental, societal and individual factors (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Grewal and Roggeveen, 2020).

The concept of omnichannel therefore represents a shift in the retail paradigm (Verhoef et al., 2015; Jocevski et al., 2019), from a retailer- to a customer-centric approach, enabling consumers to access, compare, choose, purchase and return goods more readily and seamlessly (Hsieh et al., 2012; Wagner, 2013; Blázquez, 2014; Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson, 2014; Baxendale et al., 2015; Stein and Rameseshan, 2016; Ailawadi and Farris, 2017; Gauri, 2021; Ylilehto et al., 2021). Verhoef et al. (2015:3) define omnichannel management as the "synergetic management of the numerous available channels and customer touchpoints, in such a way that the customer experience across channels and the performance over channels are optimized". Yet, despite a surge of

academic interest in the concept in the past five years, research remains fragmented (Mahadevan and Joshi, 2021), with a scarcity of studies examining how an omnichannel retailing approach affects the customer experience (Verhoef et al., 2015; Ye et al., 2018; Hickman et al., 2020) and few studies providing an understanding of the opportunities and challenges of omnichannel for the physical store (Picot-Coupey et al., 2016; Barann et al., 2020; Jocevski, 2020).

Many studies at this time focused on the cause and effect of digitalisation, technology advances and omnichannel retailing (e.g. Beck and Rygl, 2015; Rapp et al., 2015; Verhoef et al., 2015; Hagberg et al., 2016), yet the physical store is conspicuous by its relative absence in this literature stream (Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Hänninen et al., 2021). The adoption of online, multi- and omnichannel naturally resulted in a shift in research focus, yet the physical store remains the main channel choice for many consumers (Hagberg et al., 2017; Avsar, 2021; Mahadevan and Joshi, 2021). What was initially signalled as a physical retail apocalypse (Helm et al., 2020; Paul and Rosenbaum, 2020) has shifted to a recognition that the role of the physical store is being redefined, with the need for more research to understand the future of the physical store space, its multidimensionality features, its further evolution and influence on customer experiences (Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Bustamante and Rubio, 2017; Reinartz et al., 2019), especially since the COVID-19 pandemic (Gerea et al., 2021; Hänninen et al., 2021). This is crucial as retailers continue to invest in in-store technologies to enhance customer experience and engagement (Shankar et al., 2020; Ylilehto et al., 2021).

Papers 3,6, and 7 in this thesis add to this stream of literature. A key insight from the convergence of physical and virtual spaces study (paper 3), is that customer experience is facilitated by the coherent integration of multidimensional, multisensory and multi-touchpoint aspects in-store, as part of a dynamic customer experience journey, reflecting the physical place as a hub of channel intersection. It paved the way for the studies outlined in papers 6 and 7 by illuminating the changing role of the physical store from a place of transaction to interaction, through different interfaces. Papers 6 and 7 advocate and extend the transformation of the role of the physical store within an

omnichannel retail environment, affirming its reimagination as part of a broader, more complex retail ecosystem. Diverging from the dominant positivist methodologies of the past, all three studies take an explorative qualitative approach to the empirical research of this emergent stream. Across these studies, technology-mediated interactions in creating and facilitating omnichannel customer experience within the physical store play a catalytic role (for a full synopsis, see chapter 4). The next section discusses their transformative influence towards fully realising omnichannel retailing.

## 3.4. Towards omnichannel retailing through in-store technology

Technology is reshaping the retail landscape (Grewal et al., 2017, 2018; Helm et al., 2020; Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020; Shankar et al., 2020). A significant enabler of retail change over the past two decades has been digital transformation, as such technologies have become more pervasive (Reinartz et al., 2019; Ylilehto et al., 2021). In recent years, the blurring of channel boundaries has accelerated, with traditional offline stores investing in their online service offer to drive convenience and assortment, whilst online retailers have been investing in physical stores to drive customer experience (Reinartz et al., 2019). The modern retail landscape is defined by constantly changing consumer expectations and increasing customer touchpoints, which demands channel unification (Foroudi et al., 2018; Raconteur, 2021a). The physical store has become increasingly integrated with digital channels to offer a connected, personal experience in the consumer's shopping journey (Blázquez, 2014; Fernández et al., 2018; Mosquera et al., 2018). Technology-based service delivery systems in-store have become an integral part of shopping and are shown to impact on customer experience (Verhoef et al., 2009; Grewal et al., 2017; Larke et al., 2018; Hossain et al., 2019). Today, when customers can check their phones to see product assortments and prices from home, physical stores have to differentiate themselves (Gauri et al., 2021) if they are to retain a role.

In-store technologies are defined as "different devices that facilitate the shopping process at various points in the store" (Mosquera et al., 2018:66) and "digitise and enhance the customer experience" (Lorente-Martinez et al., 2020:2) by enabling

consumer interaction. Research on in-store technologies has gained increasing attention over the past twenty years, yet remains an emerging field, with most papers published over the past five years and with few accepted theoretical frameworks, adoption models or technology taxonomies (Dekimpe et al., 2020; Wolpert and Roth, 2020; Ylilehto et al., 2021). Existing studies primarily focus on consumer intention to adopt or use technologies (e.g. Venkatesh and Davis, 2000; Curran et al., 2003; Montoya-Weiss et al., 2003; Meuter et al., 2005; Weijters et al., 2007), ownership and control (e.g. Beck and Rygl, 2015; Inman and Nikolova, 2017; Bèzes, 2019), the consequences of usage on satisfaction, loyalty and engagement (e.g. Holloway and Beatty, 2008; Kim et al., 2013), cost and service measurement (e.g. Zeithaml et al., 2002; Parasuraman 2000, Parasuraman et al., 2005; Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020), and to a lesser extent, retail management strategies towards integration (e.g. Hagberg et al., 2017; Pantano et al., 2018; Roy et al., 2018) and their contribution towards store atmospherics (e.g. Poncin and Mimoun, 2014; Pantano, 2016).

From a customer perspective, technologies are seen to positively influence the shopping experience, increase store attractiveness and buying behaviour (Lee and Leonas, 2018; Savastano et al., 2019; Ylilehto et al., 2021), whilst enabling retailers to improve the digital information on customer behaviours and thereby data-driven decision-making, optimise operations and facilitate channel integration (Inman and Nikolova, 2017; Grewal et al., 2020). They are known to facilitate both utilitarian and hedonic consumption experience through self-checkout (Lee, 2015; Fernandes and Pedroso, 2017) smartphones and retail apps (Shankar et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2013; Pantano and Priporas, 2016; Fuentes et al., 2017; Perry et al., 2019) and virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies (Rese et al., 2017; Watson et al., 2018). However, most existing studies focus on a single technology type, rather than several, and their interrelated influence on the total customer experience (Blázquez, 2014; Wolpert and Roth, 2020). In terms of technology types, Radio-frequency identification (RFID), digital signage and self-service technologies are considered the most prevalent and pervasive in service settings (e.g. Weijters et al., 2007; Dennis et al., 2010; Chen, 2012; Eastlick et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2013; Renko and Druzijanic, 2014; Bhattacharya,

2015; Roggeveen et al., 2016; Venkatesh et al., 2017; Willems et al., 2017; Hauser et al., 2019; Lee and Lyu, 2019; Pantano and Vannucci, 2019; Alexander and Kent, 2020 - paper 5; Ha, 2020). The relatively few studies that take a general approach to in-store technologies serve to offer an index and classification of technologies and retailer prioritisation towards them (Willems et al., 2017; Inman and Nikolova, 2017; Hagberg et al., 2017; Pantano and Vannucci, 2019; Baier and Rese, 2020; Wolpert and Roth, 2020), with most acknowledging the role of technologies in the future of physical retailing, but there remains a dearth of research in this area (Hwangbo et al., 2017; Grewal et al., 2017, 2018; Dekimpe et al., 2020).

Despite the accelerated pace at which technology is permeating retailing (Grewal et al., 2017; Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020; Shankar et al., 2020), and its progress being a strategic issue for many retailers (Pantano and Vannucci, 2019; Wolpert and Roth, 2020), scholarly research on the impact of technology on the total customer experience remains nascent and could be considered work in progress due to the incongruence between different channels in the physical store that may generate negative experiences (Verhoef et al. 2009; Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Alexander and Kent, 2020 - paper 5). Indeed, recent trade journals (BoF, 2020; Bridges, 2021) and interactions with fashion retailers support the view that omnichannel frictions remain, with limited 'buy online return to store' or 'buy from store return to any store' service capabilities, despite recognised rapid retailer advances and investment in digitalisation since the pandemic (Industry interviews with the author, 2021, see paper 5 for seven friction points of the shopping journey). Moreover, Bäckström and Johansson's (2017) study revealed that while many retailers emphasised innovation and advanced technologies in-store, in practice most prioritised traditional values such as personnel, layout and display over technological investment. These inconsistencies are particularly evident in the fashion sector, where scholars refer to fashion retailers' innovativeness towards in-store technologies (Colombi et al., 2018; Pantano and Vannucci, 2019), conflicting with some practitioner perspectives (Stephens, 2018; Thomson, 2019; Fish, 2020; McKinsey, 2020).

Research into in-store channel integration has demonstrated continuous evolution facilitated by technologies, yet prior studies have tended to take a cross-sectional approach thereby limiting their ability to assess changes in retailer technology adoption and customer experience (e.g. Iman and Nikolova, 2017; Willems et al., 2017; Pantano and Vannucci, 2019; Yadav and Pavlou, 2020), nor on the possible usage of new technologies (Pantano et al., 2018; Shankar et al., 2020), despite strong consumer appetite (Grewal et al., 2020). Further studies are required to engage with retailing dynamics (Dekimpe and Gyskens, 2019) in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the impact of technologies and their future evolution (Souiden and Ladhari, 2019; Paul and Rosenbaum, 2020). This is a necessity - especially for physical stores - in order to avoid becoming obsolescent (Mende and Noble, 2019), to meet the high service, personalisation and convenience expectations of consumers (Grewal et al., 2020; Grewal and Roggeveen, 2020) and anticipate future unified spatial experiences (Hoyer et al., 2020).

Papers 4 and 5 address some of the above-mentioned limitations concerning retail change, innovation and technology-enabled omnichannel customer experiences over time. Both respond to the need for further research into consumer and retailer perspectives regarding in-store technologies (ISTs) in retail and their evolution (Blázquez, 2014; Inman and Nikolova, 2017; Grewal, et al., 2020). Paper 4 merges retail change and innovation-diffusion to observe fashion retailer in-store technology diffusion, and in doing so, identifies the extent and rate of retailer innovativeness and change, the types of ISTs and their level of diffusion and influence on the customer shopping experience. Similarly, paper 5 diverges from prior studies by taking a longitudinal approach to assessing the types of ISTs, their interplay with other channels, their influence on total customer experience and the changing relationship between ISTs and customer experience. In accord with paper 7, it highlights the rudimentary, limited and incremental adoption of in-store technologies by fashion retailers over the period, which led to the categorisation of seven friction points of the shopping journey, with limited realisation of omnichannel services and overall omni-customer experience. A full synopsis of all the papers is given in the next chapter.

## 4.  Synopses of publications

Paper 1: Alexander, B. and Kent, A. (2017) 'Retail Environments.' *In* Petermans, A., Kent, A. (eds.) *Retail Design*. Routledge Publishing, pp. 62-86. ISBN: 9781472467836.

The peer-reviewed edited book on Retail Design, within which 'Retail Environments' is a chapter, provides an assessment of retail design - through different design and contextual lenses, and taking a global approach - to place design practice and theory in context. This chapter posits that the retail environment be conceptualised in terms of a particular focus on both space and place. The retail store environment is often described as 'space', but if one of the defining aspects of place relates to the interactions and social relations that happen within that space, then the use of the term 'place' is arguably warranted (Simmel, 1949; Tuan, 2001; Johnstone and Conroy, 2006; Johnstone, 2012. Advanced further in chapter 5). The chapter discusses the implications of this, thereby contextualising the other papers that form the body of work in this thesis.

Paper 2: Alexander, B. (2019) 'Commerce, culture and experience convergence: fashion's third places.' Journal of Services Marketing, 33(3), pp. 257-272. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-04-2018-0116.

The paper was conceived from longstanding observation of the changing use of physical space by fashion retailers, especially given the growth of online channels and the demands of time-constrained customers. It builds empirically on paper 1, which explored the concept of fashion third places. Many scholars and practitioners have argued that the physical store would be displaced by digital developments, and increasingly, space transference away from the predominantly transactional to the more experiential was taking place, emphasising social interaction and immersion within the servicescape. This triggered questions concerning the function of physical store place and space as a novel conception of third places, their prevalence and their meaning. From a scholarly perspective, this empirical study responds to the call for further research into third place experiences (originated by Oldenburg, 1989), drawing

on servicescape and experiential retailing literature to explore and explain the prevalence and opportunities of third places to fashion retailers in physical stores in generating customer experience, and extends the critical review in paper 1.

Whilst existing studies have focused on third place typologies, meaning and attachment, they had been contextually limited, and none have linked it to customer experience (e.g. Rosenbaum, 2006; Jeffres et al., 2009; Debenedetti et al., 2014; Goode and Anderson, 2015). Thus, this was the first known paper to investigate the fashion-retail context from a consumer standpoint and merge theories of third place, servicescape and experiential retailing. In doing so, precedents retail territorialisation as the process of imbuing space with meaning and experience (explored further in chapter 5). Qualitative research was best placed to answer the research questions outlined in the paper, whereby direct store observations over a three-year period and the 'Shopping with Consumers' technique were deployed. In doing so, it begins to address the dearth of third place literature, specifically offering new understanding on how the retail environment contributes to customer experience within a fashion context.

Paper 3: Alexander, B. and Olivares Alvarado, D. (2017) 'Convergence of physical and virtual retail spaces: the influence of technology on consumer in-store experience.' *In* Vecchi, A. (ed.) *Advanced Fashion Technology and Operations Management*. IGI Global, pp. 191-219. ISBN13: 9781522518655. Chapter DOI:10.4018/978-1-5225-1865-5.ch008

This chapter, on the convergence of physical and virtual retail spaces, extends paper 1 by empirically exploring the shifts in traditional retail place and the influence of technology on facilitating customer experience in-store. In doing so, it starts to redefine the nature of retail place, moving beyond the purely physical to also embrace the virtual, giving rise to initial notions of retail territories, unbound by spatial retail contexts (explored in more detail in chapter 5). It theoretically melds store atmospherics, in-store technologies and behavioural motivations to theorise an integrated online-offline experience model that blends both the physical and the digital experience. The aim was to explore customer experience within the context of an

integrated approach to technology in-store. A case study approach with five London fashion retailers, known to have adopted in-store technologies was deployed, using multiple qualitative methods to elicit rich descriptions of customers' 'phygital' (i.e. the symbiosis of physical and virtual space) in-store experience, facilitated by technologies.

The chapter reinforces the importance of a multidimensional space, and the saliency of using traditional atmospheric and sensorial elements to stimulate and motivate consumer attraction. Yet, it also shows that retailer use of in-store technologies was prosaic, failing to facilitate a connected (online and offline) customer experience across the purchase journey. An omnichannel seamless experience was not realised. The chapter provides a snapshot of the existing state of technology adoption by fashion retailers, prompting and precursing the longitudinal approach adopted in subsequent studies (papers 4 and 5). Theoretically, the chapter provides an antecedent to papers 6 and 7 that extends the research by futurising the physical store within omnichannel retailing. In this sense, moving beyond the current situation to look ahead and offer future prognoses.

Paper 4: Alexander, B. and Kent, A. (2021) 'Tracking technology diffusion in-store: a fashion retail perspective.' *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 49(10), pp. 1369-1390. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-05-2020-0191

Paper 5: Alexander, B. and Kent, A. (2020) 'Change in technology-enabled omnichannel customer experiences in-store.' *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*. (In press, available online 14 Oct 2020) https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102338
Papers 4 and 5 extend paper 3. They were developed simultaneously out of a need to delve more deeply into if - and how - in-store technologies (ISTs) are transforming physical retailing (paper 4) and, in turn, the connected customer experience (paper 5). In contrast to prior studies, the papers take a longitudinal perspective over five-years, to determine technology integration and change in-store. While change is a recognised retail characteristic, scholarly research on retail innovation remains somewhat limited and fragmented (Hristov and Reynolds, 2015; Pinto et al., 2017). Existing studies on

technology usage in-store are conducted at a single point in time, failing to reflect the dynamics of the industry and changing consumer expectations (Mosquera et al., 2018; Pantano and Vannucci, 2019). Moreover, whilst the fashion sector is recognised as a technology innovator, this has been based on the number of technologies in-store and not on the type of technologies nor how they contribute to customer experience, with no known studies focusing on fashion retail. Despite rapid advances, research into the changing relationship between technologies and customer experience remains scarce (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Grewal et al., 2020).

Paper 4 generates a deeper understanding of the extent to which fashion retailers are innovating in terms of IST and its diffusion and how this changes over time by taking a long-term perspective. Drawing on retail change and innovation diffusion theory, the study takes a qualitative approach, using observation of 71 fashion stores in London in 2014 and 2019 (142 observations in total). The findings identify the innovation adoption strategies implemented, the types of in-store technologies diffused over time and the fashion retail innovation adopters. The study makes several theoretical contributions in terms of the development of ISTs and retail innovation by showing the limited consistent use of ISTs in fashion stores, which acts as a counterpoint to extant studies. It also offers new insight on the extent of retail change related to temporal development and adoption of in-store technologies over time, revealing a reliance on rudimentary technologies, which resonates with paper 3. Next, the research provides new knowledge regarding Diffusion of Innovation theory in retail, a nascent field of study. Moreover, the study strengthens existing research on the importance of integrating ISTs, by showing diffusion across market levels and the extent to which different fashion retailers are innovators. As a notable development from paper 3, the study highlights the advances retailers have made towards leveraging technologies to merge physical and digital spaces in pursuit of omnichannel retailing. Finally, this is the first known study to take a longitudinal approach to provide an enhanced understanding of retail change in the adoption of ISTs.

Paper 5 explores changes in technology-enabled omnichannel customer experiences in physical stores over time, specifically the types of ISTs used in the customer shopping journey, their influence on customer experience and how their usage might be improved. Methodologically, the research employs a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews in 2014 and 2019, with 40 millennial fashion consumers, based in London, over the period. The theoretical contribution of the study is fourfold. It offers new insights into the types and usage of in-store technologies across the customer journey. It provides a deeper understanding of customer experience of ISTs, specifically within a seamless approach to omnichannel fashion retailing, and the extent to which this changes over time. In doing so, it extends previous studies by taking a temporal perspective. It shows that IST implementation is limited with incremental change over the period, and not as pervasive as previously proposed, mostly restricted to utilitarian technologies that have limited effect on the customer shopping experience. It raises issues of friction between technologies, environments and people, offering seven friction categories that hamper technology readiness.

The research contributes two models that offer a lens to support retailer IST decision making. First, the "Technology-induced in-store customer experience", providing a typology of technologies that are found in store based on consumers' desire for utilitarian or hedonic customer experience. The second, conceptualises the "Technology-enabled in-store customer experience journey" framework linking technology types with each stage of the customer journey, experiential benefits derived and channel preference. In doing so, it advances knowledge of consumers' technology usage preferences at each stage of the non-linear purchase journey. Practically, providing retailers with a roadmap of consumers' technology usage preferences at each stage of the purchase journey. The study supports the call for more nuanced and creative conceptualisations to address the lacuna between academic research and retail practice within the context of the customer purchase journey and retail technologies to advance contributions towards new retailing in the post-pandemic new normal.

Paper 6: Alexander, B. and Blázquez Cano, M. (2019) 'Futurising the physical store in the omnichannel retail environment.' *In* Piotrowicz, W. and Cuthbertson, R. (eds.) *Exploring Omnichannel Retailing: Common expectations and diverse realities.* Springer Press, pp. 197-223. ISBN 978-3-319-98272-4

Paper 7: Alexander, B. and Blázquez Cano, M. (2019) 'Store of the future: towards a (re)invention and (re)imagination of physical store space in an omnichannel context.' *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 55, pp. 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.101913

The previous two themes of the published work connect in the final two papers (6 and 7) that take a futures perspective towards physical retail place and experience within an omnichannel context and specifically, the prerequisites of the designed retail environment in optimising customer experience. In doing so they explore the current situation of the physical store in terms of its role, in order to predict the nature of the reimagined space and place of the future physical store. In this regard, the papers act as antecedents to the conception of Experiential retail territories, conceived as fluid, intersecting practices, which are socio-relationally constructed, coalescing, colliding and changeable spaces of retail consumption (expounded in chapter 5). Both studies take an industry perspective, using expert interviews to enable deep exploration and discussion on the topic.

Paper 6 was the precursory study that explored the evolution of physical place in terms of experience, channel integration, the role of in-store technologies and changing consumer expectations. Six senior executive participants were recruited to discuss the evolutionary shifts in fashion physical environments. The findings revealed novel perspectives concerning the role of the store within omnichannel retailing, physical format evolution, the role of in-store technologies and types of technologies used, channel integration and predictions on future in-store experiences, specifically the importance of customer service and design in delivering the experience. Credence was given to storytelling, agility, experimentation and socially crafted third places, which

connects with paper 2. A case study on the retailer & Other Stories, is presented as best practice of delivering experience through considered design. Avenues for future research include extending the study beyond its limited size and scale, which is what paper 7 addresses, whilst also including the retailer and consumer perspectives. The paper concludes with questions for discussion and review for students and practitioners. This study's originality lies in assessing the evolution of physical place and customer experience within omnichannel retailing, forming a firm foundation for the final paper in the body of work that comprises this thesis.
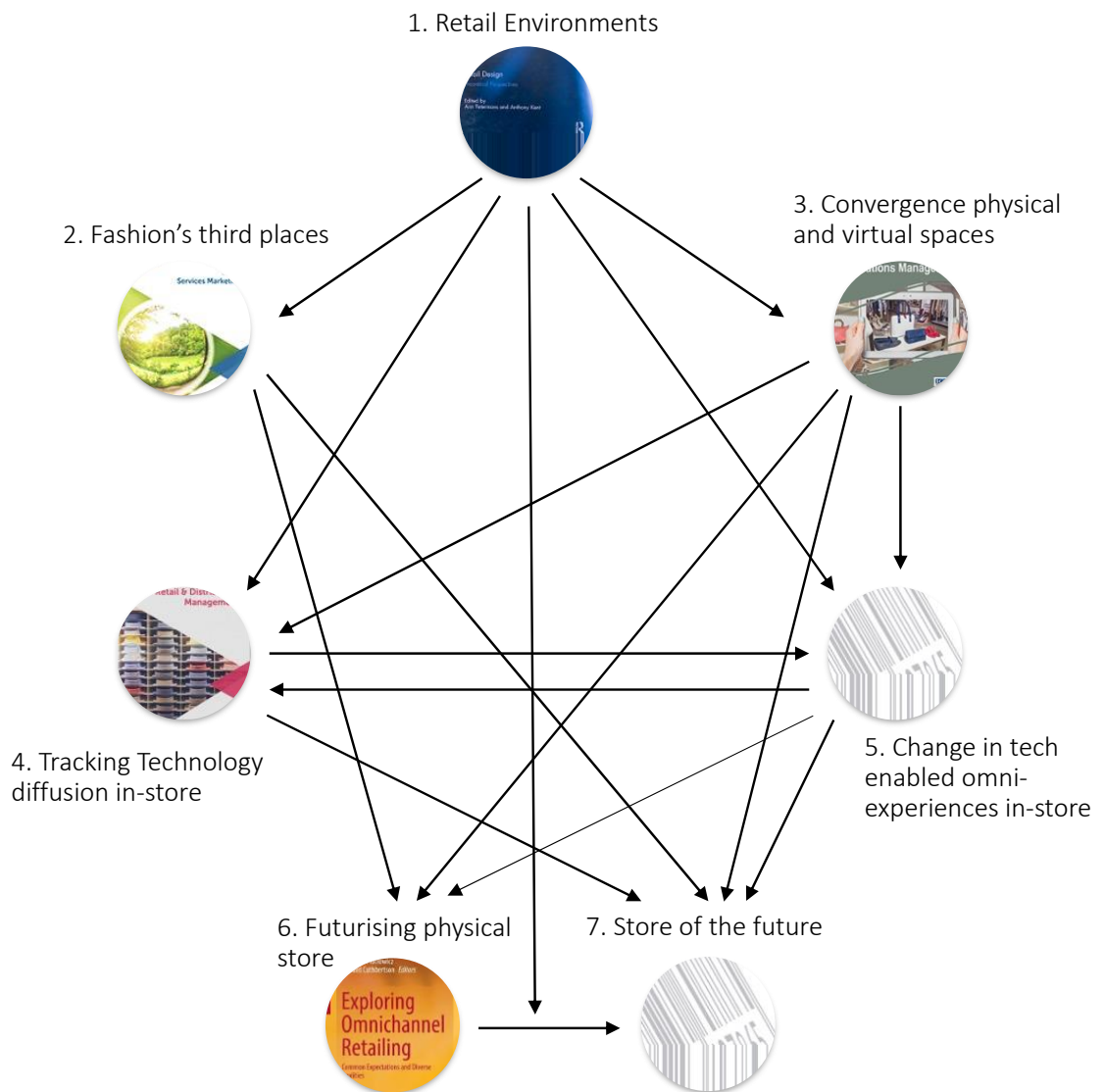
Paper 7 extends paper 6, in exploring the future of the physical store within omnichannel retailing and specifically, the prerequisites of the designed retail environment in optimising customer experience, an underexplored area of research to date. It does this by assessing the current situation of the physical store in order to offer a prognosis of the reimagined physical store in the future. Adopting an exploratory qualitative approach, primary data was expanded through semi-structured interviews with 20 industry experts.

The study proposes significant shifts in the function and characteristics of the physical store within omnichannel retailing, reimagined as a community and connected axis - a playful place for social, cultural and educational interaction and converging channel experiences. This in turn impacts retail design and format evolution, giving rise to opportunities for experimentation with more compact but impactful places. The research contributes to the lack of extant literature on experiential store spaces of the future, particularly within the fashion field. By connecting three areas of academic research - omnichannel retail, the role of the physical store and in-store customer experience - it serves to suggest the prerequisites for designed retail environments for future customer experiences, and in doing so, offers three conceptions of physical retailing. First, it conceives a schema on the current physical store form, function, experience. Second, it offers the "Slow vs fast physical store retail model", depicting polarity between slow and fast retail experiences - the former based on a discovery, explore, learn, commune and share mode, whilst the latter based on a speed, efficiency

and convenience mode. Whilst not mutually exclusive, the study accentuates slow retail. Third, the "Experiential store futures model" is conceptualised, which proposes four spatial typologies, characteristics, examples of each space and the facets common to all related to "slow retail". The originality of this study is that it addresses an underdeveloped scholarly field of study - the role of the physical store within omnichannel retailing and its future prognosis.

In conclusion, the linkages between the above papers are presented and discussed (see Figure 4), depicting how one study influenced or initiated the next and the cohesion between the body of work. The publications represent a journey of evolution and realisation of retail channels and experience from mono to omnichannel. Next, in chapter 5, I move beyond omnichannel by taking a territorological (Brighenti, 2010) perspective to show the conceptual coherence and synthesis of the publications. In doing so, this thesis offers a further overarching contribution by taking a spatial perspective in the theorisation of future retailing as Experiential retail territories.

1. Retail Environments

2. Fashion's third places

3. Convergence physical and virtual spaces

4. Tracking Technology diffusion in-store

5. Change in tech enabled omni-experiences in-store

6. Futurising physical store

7. Store of the future

# 5. Synthesis: Territitorialising retail space and place

"There is no physical setting that is not also a social, cultural, and psychological setting"
(Proshansky, 1978:150).

As Babin et al. (2021) opine, the basis for any prediction is the past. Chapter 3 described the progression of retailing and customer experience over four decades to the current point in time. This chapter aims to synthesise those developments in conceptual terms and look to the future. Given the rapidly evolving retailing industry, scholars are recognising the increasing gap between academic research and retail practice, doubting the saliency and alignment of traditional conceptualisations (Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2018; Dekimpe and Geyskens, 2019; Hänninen et al., 2021) to ongoing developments. Arguably, more nuanced, contemporary and interdisciplinary theorisations are required to help advance new retail and customer experience in meaningful ways (Picot-Coupey et al., 2016; Shi et al., 2019; Chevtchouk et al., 2021).

This chapter aims to articulate the contribution to knowledge of the body of work comprising this thesis more holistically, beyond the individual papers themselves to the work as a whole. In this respect, informed by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Brighenti (2010, 2014) and Kärrholm (2012), this chapter takes a territorological perspective, widely discussed in various academic disciplines, such as political, biological, geographical, psychological and social and behavioural sciences (see Kärrholm, 2007; Kärrholm, 2012; Brighenti, 2010; Warnaby, 2018), to unify the variety of spatial retail contexts discussed in the body of work. Specifically, the (re)evaluation of retail space and place in terms of a more fluid spatial 'territory' could be regarded as a new lens through which to offer the conception of the reimagined retail customer experience, consistent with the notion of omnichannel retailing.

First, the chapter introduces conceptions of space and place and situates these complex terms within a specific fashion retail context. Next, the conceptual metaphor of territory is discussed and contextualised to the thesis. Finally, the chapter concludes by

discussing the nature of reimagined future retail places and spaces and their characterisation as constituted Experiential retail territories.

## 5.1. The meaning of space and place

The origins of the term place date back to the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, yet despite what has become a widespread and interdisciplinary concept (e.g. in philosophy, geography, anthropology, ecology, arts, humanities, social sciences and marketing management), its meaning remains contested (Creswell, 2015). Until the 1970s and the emergence of humanistic geography, place within spatial science was confined to a location delineated by finitude, boundary, area, volume, function, populations of people and materiality (e.g. Gieryn, 2000; Escobar, 2001). However, since that time, eminent human geographers beginning with, for example, Tuan (1974), Relph (1976) and Buttimer and Seamon (1980) pioneered a re-conceptualisation of place away from 'things in the world' to a way of understanding the world, that emphasised experiences, connections and attachments.

A tripartite definition of place was conceived by Agnew (1987) as 1) *location* - most commonly conceived as a fixed point on the surface of the earth; 2) *locale* - referring to the material setting for social relations; and 3) *sense of place* - referring to the subjective and emotional attachment people have to places. In doing so, this seeks to differentiate place from space, as in place being conceived as "space invested with meaning" (Cresswell, 2015:19). Space is generally accepted as a more abstract concept than place; namely, as a "realm without meaning" (Cresswell, 2015:16), detached from materiality and cultural interpretation (Gieryn, 2000). Tuan (1974), likens space to movement and place to pauses, stopping and becoming involved, in his theorisation of place as humanised space (Borghini et al., 2009), which is constructed, understood and imagined (Gieryn, 2000).

However, this duality of meaning related to space and place masks the complexity and often coinciding conception of the terms. Lefebvre (1991), for example, conceived the notion of social spaces that are lived and imbued with meaning, which is arguably

similar to definitions of place (e.g. Agnew's (1987) notion of locale) and resonates with philosopher Martin Heidegger's (1993) notion of place as central to cementing the socio-relational dimensions through his lexicon of "Dasein" - being in, and "Dwelling" - to depict a sense of nearness and care. This emphasis on the bond between people and place, value and belonging is similarly developed by Relph (1976) and Pred (1984), who posit that place is not bound by fixed location but rather by their visuality, sense of community, attachment and rootedness that they create, which are never finished but are the result of ongoing processes and practices. This idea of simultaneously being *in* place and doing *through* place is developed by Platt et al. (2021) in their revisiting of Heidegger's (2013) notion of dwelling, which they reframe as an active and emergent process. Collectively grounded in phenomenological thinking, proponents of humanistic approaches to place recognise that "to be human is to be in place" (e.g. Tuan, 1974; Relph, 1976; Buttimer and Seamon, 1980; Pred, 1984; Sack 1992; Heidegger, 1993; Casey, 1996; Malpas, 1999, Cresswell, 2015:38).

Within traditional fashion retailing, interchangeable use of the terms space and place has dominated the business lexicon. From physical store operations that focus on doing things to the selling space within, such as 'space allocation' and 'space planning' (Varley and Rafiq, 2014; Goworek and McGoldrick, 2015), to the characterisation of physical stores as 'bricks and mortar' retailing and 'servicescapes' (Bitner, 1992; Sikos et al., 2019; Jocevski, 2020), and the selling 'channels', that refer to the materiality of the place element of traditional conceptualisations of the marketing mix. Indeed, more broadly, within a marketing context the fundamental construct of the marketing mix, emphasises 'place' as one of the dimensions of the 4Ps framework, relating to geographic location and the physical movement of goods from point of production to point of consumption (conceived by McCarthy and Perrault, 1960). In doing so, they reaffirm traditional theorists of socio-spatial relations, associated with boundaries, parcelisation and enclosure, by taking an arguably reductionist approach to place (Johnstone and Conroy, 2006, 2008; Jessop et al., 2008; Kärrholm, 2012; De-Juan Vigaray and Segui, 2019, see also paper 1), while perpetuating the overlap in terms which hinders more nuanced understanding of place and space.

These rather binary spatial notions of space and place have been contested by several theorists, with conceptions of 'third-place' (Oldenberg, 1989, see paper 2), 'third-space' (Lefebvre, 1991, i.e. first space being real space, second space being perceived space and third-space as lived space), 'progressive place' (Massey, 1987) and 're-place' (i.e. reconceptualisation of place beyond physical locales as inseparable aspects of consumers' lives) (Rosenbaum et al., 2017). Massey, for example, argues that places are marked by openness and change rather than boundedness and permanence, which Crewe and Lowe (1995) appertain in their consideration of the heterogeneity of retailing and consumption spaces, specific to fashion. Building on this, Crewe (2013) aptly argues for a recalibrated understanding of fashion consumption practice, process, space and place with the surging collision, coalescence and coexistence of physical and virtual fashion worlds. The transformative effects of digitally mediated technologies on fashion spaces, that are increasingly portable, demands a reframing and reconfiguration of traditional spatial and relational perspectives (Crewe, 2013). Dominant early narratives of digitally mediated retailing perpetuating social disconnectedness are contested, but rather, seen to augment socio-relational, interactive, imaginative, immersive, immediate, expansive, sensory, fluid, ubiquitous experience possibilities (Currah, 2002; Lehdonvirta, 2010; Turkle, 2011). Indeed, "spaces are not separately imagined, designed or commodified but, rather, are incorporated into a coalescent spatial landscape" (Crewe, 2013:765). She calls for new theorisations, visions and vocabularies of (fashion) time, space and knowledge, to better reflect the relations between people and places as "elements of a constitutive moving… fabric that is constantly being spun over and over again" (Thrift, 2011:7, cited in Crewe, 2013). It is in this non-binary and non-bipolar (Crewe, 2013) sense of place that the notion of territory is introduced and ascribed to retail.

## 5.2. Towards retail as territory

Cheetham et al (2018:4) posit that, rather than trying to reduce a given place to one dominant narrative, scholars would benefit from celebrating the "complex kaleidoscopic nature of a place". Thus, in keeping with the humanistic approach previously discussed, and taking a more nuanced understanding of place and space,

Brighenti (2010:53) argues that territory is "not an absolute concept, but is better conceived as an act or practice rather than an object or physical space" that has both expressive and functional components. This means a territory is a result of human and institutional relations, having both spatial and relational implications, and that territorial boundaries become the object of an ongoing work of enactment, reinforcement, interpretation and negotiation (Brighenti, 2010:62). This territorological perspective changes the meaning of place as a site of consumption (Kärrholm, 2012), in that instead of restricting territory to material, fixed spatial entities (i.e. servicescapes, retail settings etc.), it can be considered as having much broader socio-material and relational attributes. Thus, territories are ongoing, open productions, that may prove useful to advance towards that "place beyond place" (Massey, 1997:15). According to Malpas (1999, cited by Cresswell, 2015:48), "no place exists except in relation to other places, and every place contains other places that are related within it" - a perspective that encompasses both place and space together. In this regard, the notion of territory represents an important conceptual metaphor to capture the simultaneous proliferation of mobilities and borders (Brighenti, 2014) as fluid, adaptable practices rather than static and immutable structures (Lambach, 2019). Applied to retail, territories become embodied spaces, in which social space and social action are inseparable, and part of a lived experience of people (Cohen, 2007), made, shaped, given meaning and de-and-re-territorialised in social and individual action (Paasi, 2003; Elden, 2013).

Retail scholars have tended to focus on the materiality and physicality of the location, as a structural boundaried space, controlled by the retail brand - a place of consumption that consumers had to go to, as opposed to other disciplines that take a broader temporal, spatial, natural and social perspective to place (Johnstone and Conroy, 2006, 2008; Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011; Rosenbaum et al., 2017). Consumers were perceived as passive agents; their role limited to selecting the goods available in the stores that they relied on for shopping (De-Juan Vigaray and Segui, 2019). This unequal consumption dynamic, which generated a relationship of dependence between consumer and retailer, has prevailed for decades (De-Juan

Vigaray and Segui, 2019, see section 3.2). However, with the proliferation of channels and touchpoints, this traditional notion of the more physical retail place has been (at least in part) displaced, with multi- and omnichannel approaches creating new physical and virtual territories of consumption that blend, merge, morph, collide and change, enabled and enhanced through retail technologies (Crewe, 2013).

Virtually, the emergence of multiple spaces, conceived as 'metaverses' - computer-generated, multi-user, three-dimensional collaborative virtual environments (defined by Stephenson, 1992, cited in Gadalla et al., 2013) enabled economic and social encounters. In "Metaverse retailing" (Bourlakis et al., 2009:140), the myriad of spaces and the activities connect with other offline and online spaces, thus extending retailer opportunities to improve customer experience, through the co-creation of experience (Papagiannidis and Bourlakis, 2010).

Consequently, retail territories can be non-exclusive, overlapping and intersecting constructs whose shapes, characteristics and experiences are constantly being renegotiated. A shift has occurred from traditional separate, singular channels (places) to a convergence of on- and off-line and interstitial *spaces* of retail consumption (Lambach, 2019; Shi et al., 2019). Retail on- and off-line territories can be understood as layered, where physical, digital and social realms intersect (Bolton et al., 2018). Moreover, at the interface of this convergence of online and traditional retail forms, new possibilities emerge, such as AR, VR, artificial intelligence and the internet of things (IoT) (Hoyer et al., 2020; Ylilehto et al., 2021). This evolution of retailing beyond omnichannel is depicted in Figure 5, as entering a developmental fourth phase (which extends Figure 3 temporally into the future), conceived as Experiential retail territories.
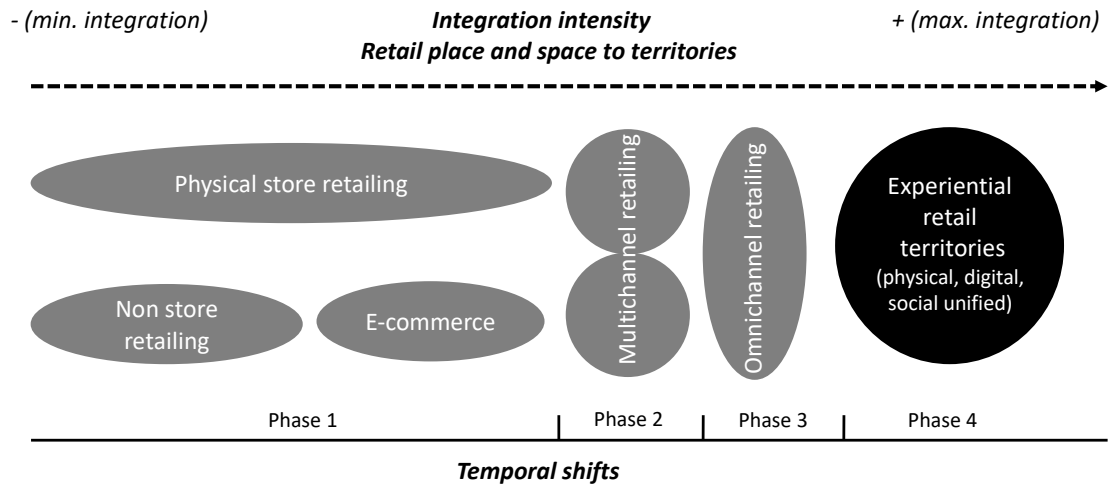
The territorial boundaries of online and offline retail will continue to blur, as online becomes an increasingly natural space in people's everyday lives. In this context, retail becomes liminal, shifting from solid to liquid - the solid retail location (place) is virtualised and liquified through e-commerce and social commerce, in which the point of sale moves and becomes hybrid, which closely aligns with Lefebvre's (1991) notion that territory and borders should be viewed as fluid, adaptable practices rather than static, immutable structures (McIntyre, 2013).

Original conceptions of liminality were introduced by anthropologist Arnold Van Gennap (1909/1960) when describing a transition in life events as a "liminal experience". Turner (1969:94-95) further elaborated on its conception, viewing persons transitioning between life experiences, as "liminars" who find themselves "betwixt and in-between". At the same time, pointing out that liminality extends beyond individual experiences of transition, to the collective group, which he termed "communitas", and also to places, times and situations (Turner, 1974). Indeed, "it is this being in the middle of - or being in between - roles, situations or spaces that constitutes liminality" (Darveau and Cheikh-Ammar, 2021:874), which Van Gennep likens to "territorial passages". In doing so, directly connecting notions of existential space (Van Manen, 1990), liminal space (Darveau and Cheikh-Ammar, 2021) retail territories and their de- and re-territorialisation (Brighenti, 2010, 2014; Kärrholm, 2012). This is an area ripe for further research, in terms of both liminality's potential theorisation as well as its

application within the field of retailing (Jahn et al., 2018; Darveau and Cheikh-Ammar, 2021).

Retailing is thus becoming increasingly ephemeral (Boustani, 2020), in which new commerciality is combining 'phygital' and omnichannel retailing within reconfigured territoriality where space is both physical and virtual (Belghiti et al., 2018; De-Juan-Vigaray and Segui, 2019; Mele et al., 2021). It is in this hybrid space that the notion of retail territory animates Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) and Massey's (1997) belief that territories are always places of passage. Meaning that places are open, hybrid and dynamic, a result of interconnecting flows and mobility, which in doing so, contests the traditional notions of place as rooted, introspective and immobile (e.g. Harvey, 1996; Lippard, 1997). If territorialisation is better understood as the process of inscribing and imbuing space with meaning and experience (Johnstone and Conroy, 2008; Elden, 2013; McIntyre, 2013; Cresswell, 2015) then in the context of retail, the conventional meaning of place is unshackled from its physical confines (Ballantyne and Nilson, 2017). These conceptualised retail territories are neither reductionist nor determinist, but they are emplaced; that is, they happen somewhere and are ensconced with meaning, value and experience (Gieryn, 2000).

An imagined, more 'holistic', future of retailing is characterised by 'multiplicity' (of interacting channels), 'dynamism' (of the customer journey), 'complexity' (of management processes and structures), 'temporality' (continually evolving online and offline presences), 'socio-relationality', 'intersectionality' (through channel and touchpoint convergence), non-linearity (in the purchase journey), 'liminality' (in-between spaces), 'dematerialised' (beyond the physical), 'customised', 'spatial', 'co-created' (between - consumer, retailer, others), comprising collective 'cognitive', 'affective', 'emotional', 'physical' and 'social' customer responses to the retailer, which are 'personal', 'subjective', 'time and context specific', and generate 'hedonic' (e.g. immersive) and 'utilitarian' (e.g. convenience) customer value (Petermans et al., 2013; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Picot-Coupey et al., 2016; Ballantyne and Nilsson, 2017; Bolton et al., 2018; Grewal and Roggeveen, 2020; Babin et al., 2021; Mele et al., 2021)

(see Figure 6). Sociality is seen as critical to the customer experience online as it is offline, enabling new customer communities and representations, unbounded by spatial or psychic territorial boundaries (Ballantyne and Nilsson, 2017; Ylilehto et al., 2021).

*Figure 6: Reimagined holistic retail experience characterisation (authors own)*



These amorphous physical and virtual retail environments create "spaces of proximity" for consumers (Shi et al., 2019:2). Therefore, retail territories arise through processes of producing, maintaining and assigning these myriad spaces with meaning (Kärrholm, 2007, 2008). Notions of digital or physical first retailers are displaced by the idea of an integrated retail territory - fully blended (Bolton et al., 2018), as conceived in Figure 7. Each circle represents a point on a continuum of convergence, orientated towards physical (to the left) or digital (to the right) spheres with complete coalescence and overlay in the centre. But importantly, these retail territories are not seen as singular entities but complex colliding, converging and conjunct spatialities and temporalities. The experiential characteristics presented in Figure 6 overlay this continuum, with their

relative resonance, dependent on the retailer's temporal spatial reality. Collectively, they encompass the fluidity, openness and mobility of the retail territories.
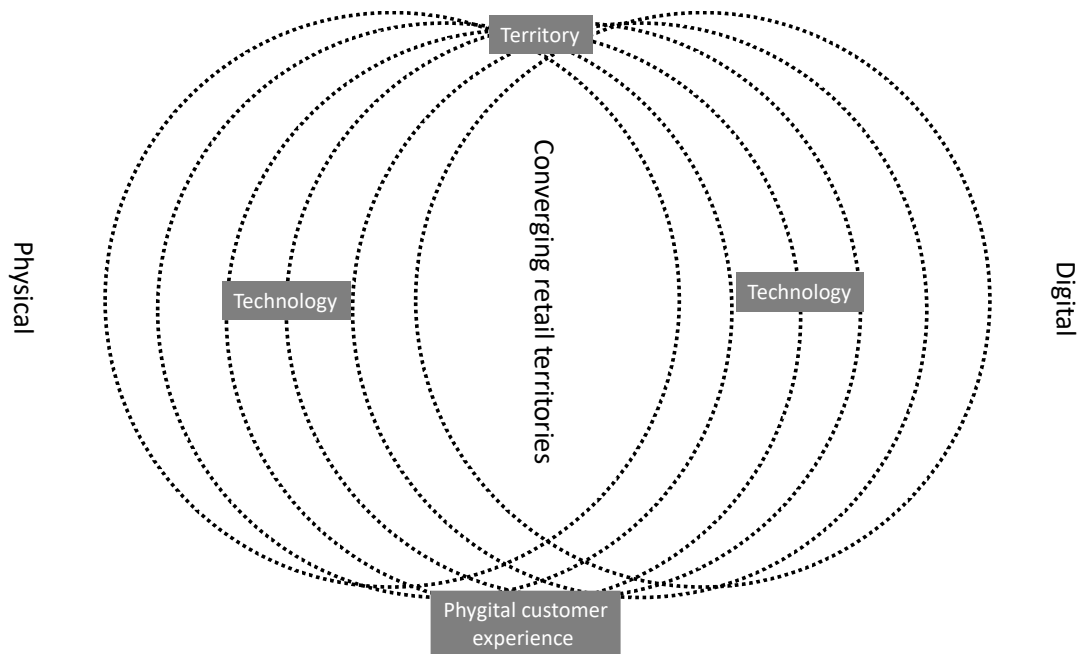
Whilst technology is expected to continue to play a critical role in retail territories and customer experience (Bolton et al., 2018; Hoyer et al., 2020; Gauri et al., 2021), offering retailers new tools with which to create new interacting spatial touchpoints, arguably the fundamentals of retail value creation remain constant (Babin et al., 2021). As previously discussed, satisfying consumers' utilitarian and hedonic shopping value has received varying attention, often in dualism to each other over the years, but these values are regarded as working in synchronicity today, in delivering customer-centric experiences, characterised by either their 'immersive' nature (e.g. entertainment) or 'convenience' (e.g. immediacy) (Gauri et al., 2021, see papers 5 and 7).

It is argued that the physical store remains central in generating both hedonic and utilitarian value for customers (Babin et al., 2021) within this experiential retail territory, which transcends channels and encompasses the reimagined characteristics aforementioned on a continuum of transformation, based on integration intensity. As

previous scholars allude (Moisander and Eriksson, 2006) when it comes to digitalisation "it is an ongoing process that should be approached with openness and dynamism to what it might encompass" (Hagberg et al., 2016:696). Not something imposed upon us that sits outside of retailing, but rather reflects what we do and create through use and social interaction; a process of transformation from *within* retailing. In this sense, the conception of Experiential retail territories aptly conveys the future prognosis of retailing, wherein "place is a centre of meaning constructed by experience" (Tuan, 1975:152).

The physical territory emerges as an experience-based hub that connects the various touchpoints and facilitates seamless integration, customer experience and value creation. The body of work posits that in the reimagined physical store space (papers 6 and 7), it is not just about what is offered (i.e. a shift from products to experiences, see papers 1 and 2), but how it is being offered (in particular, facilitated by technology, see papers, 3,4 and 5), thus challenging the very locus of retailers' value proposition, creation, and delivery (Bell et al., 2018a; Jocevski, 2020). A focus on deriving value through creating and delivering customer experience will remain a strategic priority for retailers to survive and thrive regardless of inevitable future retail paradigm shifts (Cook, 2014; Babin and Krey, 2020) and is ripe for further scholarly research, as discussed in Chapter 6.

# 6. Methodological reflection and future research directions

This chapter first reflects back on my methodological choices across the publications that constitute the body of work, and more generally on my epistemological perspective, as an interpretivist, who draws on the methodological plurality that qualitative research offers to induce rich understandings of the field (e.g. Miles and Huberman, 1984; Grove and Fisk, 1992; Gummesson, 2000, 2002). It then reflects forward to show the saliency of my body of work within the current scholarly calls for further research in the field and concludes by expounding on my personal research trajectory and directions of future research.

## 6.1. Methodological reflection

Qualitative research has been of growing interest within social sciences, particularly in marketing and management research (Cepeda and Martin, 2005; Cassell and Symons, 2006; Cassell et al., 2006; Crescentini and Mainardi, 2009; Parker, 2014), due to increasing dissatisfaction with the types of outcomes provided from quantitative techniques (Summers 2001; Gummersson, 2002; Alam, 2005; Cassell and Symons, 2006; Parker, 2014). Qualitative enquiry enables investigation of issues previously ignored by the positivist research paradigm, whilst also facilitating interdisciplinary approaches to complex problems and a readiness to address novelty (Parker, 2014). Significantly, it encourages engagement of the researcher with the field, with context and with subject specificities, which is deemed important given the shift towards global digitalisation and greater business complexity (Guercini, 2014; Parker, 2014). In the dynamic retail sector specifically, retailers are continuously having to make sense of flux and change, making the thick, holistic, contextual understandings generated by qualitative methodologies arguably more appealing and relevant (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Healy et al., 2007). Qualitative research benefits from addressing a plurality of research paradigms, within which there are many research methods, research processes and techniques - multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary usage, used to solicit rich descriptions (McCracken, 1988; Thompson et al., 1989; Yin, 1994; Silverman, 1998; Alam, 2005; Cepeda and Martin, 2005; Cassell and Symons, 2006; Cassell et al., 2006). Importantly, qualitative research has received broad acknowledgement of its value and

validity as a research approach (Eisenhardt, 1989; Cassell and Redman, 2001; Weber, 2004; Guercini, 2014).

Within the marketing domain (and specifically experience research), a quantitative approach remains dominant, specifically reliant on the survey method (Alam, 2005; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Khan and Rahman, 2015a; Becker, 2018) (See Table 4 for the preponderance of quantitative approach in retail customer experience studies). Yet, subjectivity is regarded as being inherent in customer experience (Brakus et al., 2009; Bäckström and Johannson, 2017), which necessitates a *qualitative* enquiry into this emergent field (Khan and Rahman, 2015a; Becker and Jaakkola, 2020). Edmondson and McManus (2007) caution that extensive application of quantitative research in an emerging domain that has not achieved maturity is unlikely to produce compelling field research. Moreover, recent studies highlight the importance of interpretive qualitative studies to achieve greater insight into the customer experience construct specifically (Healy et al., 2007; Khan and Rahman, 2015a; Becker, 2018). Therefore, in adopting a qualitative approach, the research underpinning this thesis develops new knowledge of the emerging research area of the nature of experiential physical retail fashion places and virtual spaces, and their convergence.

*Table 4: Chronology of typical empirical studies on retail customer experience, the retail setting and the dominant research approach and design taken*

| Retail setting | Research approach | Research design | Study | Title |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Physical store (offline) | Quantitative | Survey | Kaltcheva and Weitz (2006) | Why should a retailer create an exciting store environment? |
| | | | Bagdare and Jain (2013) | Measuring retail customer experience |
| | | | Bagdare (2013) | Antecedents of retail customer experience |
| | | | Bagdare (2015) | Emotional determinants of retail customer experience |
| | | | Khan and Rahman (2016) | Retail brand experience: scale development and validation |
| | | | Bustamante and Rubio (2017) | Measuring customer experience in physical store environments |
| | | | Triantafillidou et al. (2017) | The effects of retail store characteristics on in-store leisure shopping experience |

| | | | Khan et al. (2020) | Customer experience and commitment in retailing: Does customer age matter? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Qualitative | Critical incident technique | Bäckström and Johansson (2006) | Creating and consuming experiences in retail store environments: comparing retailer and consumer perspectives |
| | | Focus groups and interviews | Bäckström (2011) | Shopping as leisure: an exploration of manifoldness and dynamics in consumers shopping experience |
| | | Ethnographic interviews | Petermans et al. (2013) | A holistic framework for conceptualising customer experience in retail environments |
| | | Interpretive structural modelling (ISM) | Khan and Rahman (2015b) | Brand experience anatomy in retailing: An interpretive structural modelling approach |
| | | Critical incident technique | Bäckström and Johansson (2017) | An exploration of consumers' experiences in physical stores: comparing consumers' and retailers' perspectives in past and present times |
| Multichannel | Quantitative | Survey | Blázquez (2014) | Fashion shopping in multichannel retail: The role of technology in enhancing the customer experience |
| | | | Pantano and Viassone (2015) | Engaging consumers on new integrated multichannel retailing settings: challenges for retailers |
| | | | Jin et al. (2021) | Consumer store experience through virtual reality: its effect on emotional state and perceived store attractiveness |
| | Qualitative | Sequential incident technique | Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) | Towards the identification of consumer experience touchpoint elements |
| Omnichannel | Quantitative | Survey | Herhausen et al. (2015) | Integrating bricks with clicks: Retailer-level and channel-level outcomes of online-offline channel integration |
| | | | Ieva and Ziliani (2018) | Mapping touchpoint exposure in retailing: Implications for developing an omnichannel customer experience |
| | | | Quach et al. (2020) | Service integration in omnichannel retailing and its impact on customer experience |
| | | | Tueanrat et al. (2021) | A conceptual framework of the antecedents of customer journey satisfaction in omnichannel retailing |

| | Mixed method | Survey and interviews | Hickman et al. (2020) | An omnichannel approach to retailing: demystifying and identifying the factors influencing an omnichannel experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Qualitative | Observation and interviews, longitudinal, 2-years | Picot-Coupey et al. (2016) | Channel design to enrich customers' shopping experiences: Synchronizing clicks with bricks in an omni-channel perspective - the Direct Optic case |
| | | Interviews | Tyrväinen and Karjaluoto (2020) | Omnichannel experience: Towards successful channel integration in retail |
| *Physical store to omnichannel* | *Qualitative* | *Multi-method, longitudinal approach in papers 2,4,5* | *My body of work* | *Papers 2-7* |

(author's own)

Empirically, qualitative methods were deployed across the body of work (papers 2-7), with a focus on semi-structured interviews (papers 2,3,5,6 and 7) and observational methods (papers 2,3 and 4). My research aligns with the localism approach put forward by Alvesson (2003), whereby the researcher takes a critical stance and perceives the interview process as an opportunity to explore the meaning of the research topic (2003:17). The localist position is based on understanding interviews in a social context, arguing that "social phenomena do not exist independently of people's understanding of them", and the narratives produced through the interview are "situated accounts" of the phenomenon (Hammersley, 2007:297). As Qu and Dumay (2011: 242) assert, a localist approach to interviewing can take different approaches because of its potential to explore complex issues from different theoretical perspectives deploying questioning and listening to engender rich descriptions (Kvale, 1996; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Alvesson, 2003).

Furthermore, I took a more novel approach by using the observation method, generally uncommon amongst marketing research (Grove and Fisk, 1992; Lee and Broderick, 2007, see Table 4). It is widely recognised that services are dynamic, experiential, living processes within the marketing domain, which cannot be readily disassembled, making it difficult to investigate through traditional research methodologies (Weber, 2004;

Palmer, 2010; Becker, 2018). In contrast, observational methods are more pertinent to capturing the evolutionary nature of retail services situations and interactions (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Grove and Fisk, 1992), especially for deepening our understanding of retail experiences (Healy et al., 2007). Observation benefits by complementing other data collection methods, offers an up-close view of phenomena by seeking 'real world' information, obtained in their natural setting, thereby enabling deep discovery of how things work in situ (Wells and Sciuto, 1966; Miles and Huberman, 1984; Grove and Fisk, 1992; Goulding, 2005; Healy et al., 2007; Lee and Broderick, 2007; Watson, 2011; Silverman, 2014; Lashley, 2018).

Sampling considerations across the body of work adhered to the principles provided by methodological scholars (e.g. Morse, 2000; Guest et al., 2006; Marshall et al., 2013) to overcome the issue that qualitative sample size is not often discussed in the literature (Boddy, 2016). The papers refer to the scope and nature of the topic under investigation, the duration with each respondent and the homogeneity of the population under consideration (Morse, 2000; Guest et al., 2006; Trotter, 2012). It is acknowledged that studies based on a small number of participants are likely to yield detailed descriptions of consumers' experiences, which are useful for documenting uniqueness as well as shared patterns (Patton, 1990).

Data across the corpus of work comprising this thesis was analysed thematically, a process widely adopted in qualitative research, by providing a detailed analysis of key aspects of the data (Flick, 2013; Nascimento and Steinbruch, 2019). Braun and Clark's (2006) six phases of analysis was used: data familiarisation, initial code generation, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. By systematically identifying themes and patterns of meaning, these categories summarised, and key quotes added to gain interpretive understanding.

Given the papers' naturalistic paradigm, Guba and Lincoln's (1994) criteria for assessing qualitative research trustworthiness and authenticity were broadly applied in the operationalisation of the research, as summarised:

- Research instrument: themes and theoretical constructs identified in the literature informed its design, which together with research questions, were used to guide the onward data collection.

- Data collection phase: rich descriptions were sought, ensuring extensive fieldnotes and accounts were gathered.

- Data analysis phase: minimisation of personal bias and objective probing were used to generate different perspectives and, where applicable, inter-researcher reliability was undertaken to add rigour and quality to the themes deduced.

- Procedure transparency: during the stages of research, detailed records concerning the protocol, codebook and database were kept.

The research was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines of the researcher's employing institution, University of the Arts, London and ethical approval was granted by Manchester Metropolitan University. Specifically, all papers comprising the body of work abided by guiding ethical principles concerning respect for persons, justice and beneficence (see Table 5). This included adherence to procedures related to informed and voluntary consent, confidentiality, anonymity, preventing harm and reciprocity (Flick, 2013). For the papers involving participants (papers 2,3,5,6 and 7), information about each study was provided prior to consent being gained. This included the purpose, procedures, time period, benefits and risks of participation, intended outcomes, dissemination of the research, voluntary nature of taking part and the offer of anonymity.

Notwithstanding adherence to the above procedures, qualitative fieldwork, focused on understanding people and their natural environments as insider's, inherently elicits some ethical issues, especially in relation to observational research (Stafford and Stafford, 1993; Rossman and Rallis, 2017). The observation fieldwork undertaken comprised of overt participant observation involving consumers (papers 2 and 3), as well as covert observation of the retail environment (papers 2 and 4). Overt observation research is generally considered ethically acceptable as informed consent is gained and the research setting agreed (Stafford and Stafford, 2017) (see Table 5 for applicability to

my papers). Many studies have recognised the issue of 'reactivity' in overt research, resulting in a change in participants' natural behaviour because of the knowledge that they are being observed (e.g. Bouchard, 1976; Neale and Liebert, 1980). This has given rise to the argument for covert observation, where the researcher's true identity remains concealed, resulting in arguably less bias and greater 'truth' (Neale and Liebert, 1980; Schuler, 1982). Covert observation raises ethical concerns in relation to deception, as informed consent is not gained and the participant remains unaware of the research (Bulmer, 1982). However, covert advocates affirm it is a necessary and useful way of gaining truthful information and argue that revealing the research purpose and gaining consent need not be sought (e.g. Denzin and Erikson, 1982; Jorgensen, 1989; Stafford and Stafford, 1993). Two of the papers (2 and 4) in the body of work adopt covert observation, in the quest to generate more accurate and truthful data, which was collected in-situ (Hirschman, 1986). The primary activity being observed was the physical retail environment, specifically the prevalence of third places and in-store technologies respectively, therefore customers (and the retailers themselves) were not deemed to be at risk. Concurring with the Marketing Research Society's reasoning (Stafford and Stafford, 1993) that if research objectives are justifiable, there is no perceived risk to people and the research advances knowledge, then methods that seek optimal truth are important to consider. A cogent overview of the research procedures undertaken across the body of work, including methods, setting, instrument design and ethical considerations are offered in Table 5.

*Table 5: Body of work research procedures undertaken*

| Paper # | Research procedures | Research setting | Research instrument (theoretical constructs) | Ethical documents |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Retailer non-participant observation* and Shopping with Consumers technique (incl. semi-structured interviews and participant observation) | Fashion retail stores, London and adjacent public setting | Servicescape, third place and customer experience Bitner (1992), Crick (2011), Pine and Gilmore (2011) | • Informed consent<br>• Research instrument<br>• *Consent not required |
| 3 | Semi-structured industry interviews and Shopping with Consumers technique | Fashion retail stores, London and adjacent public setting | Atmospherics, multi-sensory, in-store technologies and consumer purchase journey | |

| | | | Turley and Milliman (2000), Hultén (2011), Pantano and Naccarato (2010) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Retailer non-participant observation | Fashion retail stores, London | Retail change and Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Rogers (2003) | • Consent not required<br>• Research instrument |
| 5 | Semi-structured consumer interviews | LCF, UAL premises or online | Customer shopping experience, consumer purchase journey, in-store technologies Lemon and Verhoef (2016), Pantano et al. (2017) | • Informed consent<br>• Research instrument |
| 6&7 | Semi-structured industry interviews | Company's premises | Physical store and omnichannel retailing, customer experience Verhoef (2015), Pine and Gilmore (2011), Backström and Johansson (2006) | |

(author's own)

## 6.2. Further research in the field

Despite rapid advances in retail research and practices over the past three decades, the potential for extensive further research is widely recognised, especially concerning the physical store, customer experience, and its management within an omnichannel context (e.g. Palmer, 2010; Picot-Coupey et al., 2016; Becker, 2018; Grewal and Roggeveen, 2020; Grewal et al., 2021; Hänninen et al., 2021). As Table 6 depicts, the future research directions from the latest scholarly journals (published 2020-2021) give prominence to the themes discussed in my body of work, thereby demonstrating its relevance.

Whilst the adoption of online, multi- and omnichannel has naturally resulted in a shift in research focus, the physical store remains the main channel choice for many consumers (Fish, 2020; GlobalData, 2020; Mahadevan and Joshi, 2021) and the largest sales channel (Wolpert and Roth, 2020; Steininger et al., 2021). Store-based retailing still accounted for 70% of global clothing and footwear retail sales in 2020, showing its strategic importance in the connected customer experience journey (Euromonitor, 2021). However, its role is being redefined within the digital economy and scholars acknowledge the need for more research to understand the future of the physical store space, its multidimensionality features, their evolution due to the continued growth of

digital channels and their influence on customer experiences, (Bäckström and Johansson, 2017; Bustamante and Rubio, 2017; Reinartz et al., 2019) especially since the COVID-19 pandemic (Hänninen et al., 2021). This is crucial as retailers continue to invest in in-store technologies to enhance customer experience and engagement (Ylilehto et al., 2021). Indeed, the Marketing Science Institute has recognised its strategic importance, including it as a research priority for six years concurrently (2014-2020) (Bustamante and Rubio, 2017; MSI, 2020).

*Table 6: Future research agendas, by retail scholars related to the domain of study, 2020-21*

| Scholar | Date | Journal | Research agenda |
|---|---|---|---|
| Roggeveen and Sethuraman | 2020 | *Journal of Retailing* | • Impact of COVID-19 on types of technologies retailers should invest in for short and longer term<br>• Changing consumer expectations and their use of technology post pandemic<br>• Measuring retailer returns from technology investment |
| Grewal and Roggeveen | 2020 | *Journal of Retailing* | • How technology influences shopping behaviour and the outcomes of such technologies<br>• Retail atmospherics and their effects in different customer journey stages, and how they shape customer decisions<br>• Purchase journey nonlinearities<br>• Holistic customer experience |
| Grewal et al. | 2020 | *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* | • In-store technology and customer experience<br>• In-store technologies and front-line staff (social interaction)<br>• Negative effects of in-store technology |
| MSI | 2020 | *Marketing Science Institute* | • Strategies to prioritise customer value at all touchpoints during the omnichannel customer journey<br>• Customer-technology interface<br>• Managing brand experience across the customer journey |
| Chevtchouk et al. | 2021 | *Journal of Product & Brand Management* | • Interdisciplinary studies on customer experience, especially from sociological and social anthropology perspectives<br>• New CX methodologies to be created or integrated from other disciplines |
| Grewal et al. | 2021 | *Journal of Retailing* | • Retailer prioritisation of brick-and-mortar vs digital operations<br>• Facets of omnichannel operations that drive customer experience effectively<br>• Retailers use of in-store and online technology to enhance sales<br>• Social interaction and technology usage |

| | | | • Can virtual retail technologies stimulate customers' real physical experience? <br> • Can technology augment retail associates' efforts to interact with customers? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hänninen et al | 2021 | *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research* | • The future role of the store and physical store space needs to be reimagined and redefined <br> • A broader understanding of technological impacts on retail value <br> • Priorities of customers in 2020s need to be recognised |
| Babin et al. | 2021 | *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* | • Assess importance of human (social) contact in post-COVID retail interactions <br> • Creating hedonic value to shop in physical stores post pandemic <br> • Assessing customer loyalty - is it to retailers or technology? <br> • Focus on practical issues of relevance to retailers |
| Mahadevan and Joshi | 2021 | *Benchmarking: An International Journal* | • Omnichannel retailing and enhanced customer value <br> • Consumer expectations from omnichannel shopping to deliver integrated shopping experiences across touchpoints |

(author's own)

This PhD anticipates and responds to recent calls for further exploration of the customer experience phenomenon, emphasising dynamic rather than static perspectives (paper 3,4 and 5), a focus on customer-centric purchase journeys and broader conceptions of customer experience including interactions with other actors, channels and touchpoints (papers 2,3,4,6 and 7), which require more innovative qualitative enquiries (paper 2,3,4,5,6 and 7) (Grewal et al., 2009; Palmer, 2010; Becker, 2018; Grewal et al., 2020; Grewal et al., 2021). The body of work offers multiple avenues for further research, which broadly progress the three aforementioned themes (see section 2.4), scholarly calls for future research (see Table 6)  and shapes the direction of my personal retail research trajectory as follows:

- Theme 1: Deeper, broader understanding of the dynamic technological influences on customer experience and customer experience management within and across channels, customer journeys, countries, sectors, generations and genders over time (papers 1,3,4 and 5)

- Theme 2: Redefinition and reimagination of the role of the physical store, place and space within omnichannel retailing (papers 2,3,6 and 7)

- Theme 3: Recognition, understanding and anticipation of shifting customer priorities, values and behaviours in a post-COVID-19 retail environment (papers 5,6 and 7)

## 6.3. Future research agenda

Continuous change is intrinsic to retailing (Brown, 1987), therefore my research is progressing across all the above themes. Specifically, the novel longitudinal studies on assessing change in in-store technologies and customer experiences of them (papers 4 and 5) is in its seventh year of data collection. Consumer interviews and retailer observations are currently being conducted to contribute to the rich, temporal perspectives regarding in-store technologies in retail, their diffusion and influence on customer experience, specifically types of technologies and consumer attitudes towards them. In doing so, it serves to qualify expectations of continual change and adoption of retail technology, and the extent and acceleration of such change post-pandemic (Grewal et al., 2021).

In contrast to prior studies, my research found that in-store technology diffusion was limited, largely restricted to utilitarian technologies, with limited effect on the customer shopping experience, and change was incremental over the five-year period. It is therefore interesting to assess the implications that COVID-19 has had on retail change, adoption and integration of technologies in-store, given its immediate and significant impact on non-essential retailing (Grewal and Roggeveen, 2020; Grewal et al., 2021). Scholars recognise the need for further research that draws on how the persistence and pervasiveness of technologies and technology types influence customer experience across the purchase journey, over time (Cervantes and Franco, 2020; Grewal et al., 2021, see Table 6), which this continuing research directly addresses. Two further academic papers are anticipated for retail-oriented scholarly journals and through practitioner engagement and publications.

In accordance with research theme 2, channel integration continues to prevail, especially since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with many retailers seeking to

operate all channels seamlessly, by optimising all customer touchpoints to transform the customer experience (Grewal et al., 2021). I am continuing my research into retail spaces, especially concerning the facets that comprise the omnichannel customer experience by currently conducting interviews with industry experts and fashion retailers to generate a deeper understanding of the future physical store space. The pandemic forced many retailers to shift their focus to self-preservation (Raconteur, 2021b), yet it also caused retailers to introduce and expand on new ways to experience shopping (e.g. livestream and subscription), as well as virtual places for shopping for customers (e.g. Facebook and Instagram), facilitated by technologies (Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020). With continual consumer behavioural and technological shifts, it is important for retailers to understand what types of spaces and places as well as experiences customers are likely to value post-pandemic. This research is intended for retail-focused scholarly publications.

Concerning types of retail technology specifically, there has been a proliferation in smart devices and improving capabilities of AI-powered voice technologies, with the global conversational AI market estimated to grow from £3.4bn in 2020 to £9.8bn in 2025 - with 8.4 billion consumers using voice assistants via devices (Raconteur, 2021b). Despite growing use of technologies, there remains little academic research on how they influence consumer perception and behaviours (Cervantes and Franco 2020). Scholarly research on the IoT is still burgeoning (Hoyer et al., 2020; Grewal et al., 2021), with opportunities to explore further how voice technologies are integrated into consumer's everyday lives and, what influence total connectedness has on customer experience across the purchase journey, especially with the growth of voice search on consumer behaviour (consumer perspective) and on brand engagement and loyalty (retailer perspective). This area of research interest relates to research themes 1 and 3.

## 6.4. Concluding reflections

This thesis is the outcome of three decades of studying, working in - and lecturing on - fashion business. The retrospective route (as opposed to 'ab-initio') taken benefits from drawing from a portfolio of existing peer-reviewed publications, yet due to the nature

of an evolving eclectic research journey, is coupled with the difficulty of deducing a singular theoretical theme on which to base the selection, as well as being a 'road less travelled' by PhD candidates and institutions alike (Smith, 2015). Critics may posit this as a delimiting factor of the PhD by publication route compared to conventional doctoral theses. Both the extended research journey and the publication's multidisciplinarity may raise concerns regarding research design, organisation and control. However, the body of work celebrates the multidisciplinary approach taken and the rich plurality of the publications' contribution to knowledge, both as constituent individual papers and also in their coherence and synthesis through the notion of Experiential retail territories. A fascination with the physical store, customer experience and future retail coagulates the body of work that constitutes this thesis, from which four key contributions ensue (see section 2.5):

- Chronology of retail types of places and spaces that enable and enhance customer experience (papers 1,2 and 3),

- Temporal perspectives to customer experience management and the customer journey mediated by technologies (papers 4 and 5),

- Reimagined conceptions of the role of the physical store within omnichannel retailing (papers 6 and 7), and

- The positing of Experiential retail territories (through the summation and synthesis of the papers comprising the body of work) as original theorisation in the prognosis of future retail, in which two theoretical models that depict its nature, ensue.

More broadly, the body of work offers originality in its engagement and openness to research method novelty, in contrast to the dominant approach often taken in the field (see section 6.1).

The research journey undertaken and the selected papers in this thesis is one of personal emergence as an academic writer. It reflects change, quality of contribution to the field from first to final paper and the discovery and maturation of my academic voice. The retrospective route enabled the tracing of the sometimes painful, yet

bountiful developmental trajectory over the period, which is objectively measured by the reception and reach of the publications in their citations (see appendix 2). Beyond the traditional author metrics, my research has been disseminated and discussed with the wider scholar community in conference participation and presentation, which have served to generate new research collaboration opportunities whilst building scholarly networks. From an industry perspective, my research has provided opportunities to share outputs with the fashion industry and retailing more generally, through keynote presentations, roundtable discussions and trade show interactions. Crucially, my research underpins my teaching practice, offering a symbiotic relationship of knowledge transmission and generation, a relationship traditionally lacking connectivity within academia (Brew, 2003). This has resulted in new research avenues of enquiry and the formation of the Fashion Retail Research Group as a community of practice.

Significantly, the papers' synthesis in this thesis gives purpose and direction to my future research as illuminated in the research themes aforementioned (see sections 6.2 and 6.3). These research directions have gained momentum since the global pandemic, which has resulted in greater uncertainty for the retail industry. Fashion's places and spaces are continually being re-enacted, replayed and relayed (Crewe, 2013). We increasingly inhabit multiple spaces whose interactions and relationalities actuate ongoing important questions about people, places and retailing. In this scenario, the socio-relational focus of Experiential retail territories provides a valuable starting point for future multidisciplinary research.

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# Appendix 1: Evidence to support the co-authored publications

Paper 1

**PhD by published works**
**Research Collaboration Consent Form**

In order to establish a *prima facie* case application for **PhD by published works**, I need to include a signed statement indicating the extent of the contribution by other collaborating researchers with reference to the contribution to design, analysis, conduct of the research and writing up/creation of the publication.

Please review the following statement in full and provide your written consent by completing the table and inserting your signature / date.

1. Research Collaborator Name: *Dr Anthony Kent*

2. Research title: "*Retail Environments*".

3. Research publication: *In Petermans, A., Kent, A. Eds. Retail Design. Routledge Publishing. ISBN: 9781472467836. Chapter 5, pp. 62-86.*

4. Lead researcher / author: *Bethan Alexander*

5. Statement of the nature and extent of relative contribution:

    a. Research design: *Agreed and accomplished collaboratively between authors: 50% Bethan Alexander, 50% Anthony Kent*
    b. Research analysis: *Agreed and accomplished collaboratively between authors: 50% Bethan Alexander, 50% Anthony Kent.*
    c. Conduct of the research: Shared equally between authors: 50% Bethan Alexander, 50% Anthony Kent
    d. Write-up / advancement of the publication: *Write up led by Alexander, 80%, advancement of the publication led by Kent (as one of the editors)*

|  | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| I agree with the statement of research contribution given | x |  |
| I agree with the published work being used as part of the application for PhD by publication by the lead author | x |  |

Signature:

Date:  20/11/17

1    | Research collaboration consent form proforma

Paper 3

**ual:** university of the arts london / london college of fashion | FB fashion business school

## PhD by published works
## Research Collaboration Consent Form

In order to establish a *prima facie* case application for **PhD by published works**, I need to include a signed statement indicating the extent of the contribution by other collaborating researchers with reference to the contribution to design, analysis, conduct of the research and writing up/creation of the publication.

Please review the following statement in full and provide your written consent by completing the table and inserting your signature / date.

1. Research Collaborator Name: *Daniela Olivares Alvarado*

2. Research title: *"Convergence of physical and virtual retail spaces: the influence of technology on consumer in-store experience"*

3. Research publication: *In Vecchi, A. Ed. The Book of Advanced Fashion Technology and Operations Management. IGI Global.*

4. Lead researcher / author: *Bethan Alexander*

5. Statement of the nature and extent of relative contribution:

   a. Research design: *Agreed and executed collaboratively between authors.*
   b. Research analysis: *Initiated by Alvarado but extended and re-worked by Alexander.*
   c. Conduct of the research: Initially conducted by Alvarado under the supervision of Alexander but extended by Alexander for publication.
   d. Write-up / advancement of the publication: *Led solely by Bethan Alexander.*

| | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| I agree with the statement of research contribution given | ✓ | |
| I agree with the published work being used as part of the application for PhD by publication by the lead author | ✓ | |

Signature:

Date: July 23, 2018

1 | Research collaboration consent form proforma

Paper 4

**PhD by published works**
**Research Collaboration Consent Form**

In order to establish a *prima facie* case application for **PhD by published works**, I need to include a signed statement indicating the extent of the contribution by other collaborating researchers with reference to the contribution to design, analysis, conduct of the research and writing up/creation of the publication.

Please review the following statement in full and provide your written consent by completing the table and inserting your signature / date.

1. Research Collaborator Name: *Dr Anthony Kent*
2. Research title: **"Tracking technology diffusion in-store: a fashion retail perspective"**

3. Research publication: *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management (in review)*

4. Lead researcher / author: *Bethan Alexander*

5. Statement of the nature and extent of relative contribution:

   a. Research design: *Led by Alexander*
   b. Research analysis: *Completed by Alexander*
   c. Conduct of the research: *Co-led by Kent and Alexander*
   d. Write-up / advancement of the publication: *Completed by Alexander*
   e. *Overall Alexander was responsible for 75% of the paper.*

|  | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| I agree with the statement of research contribution given | x |  |
| I agree with the published work being used as part of the application for PhD by publication by the lead author | x |  |

Signature:

Date:  15.06.20

1    | Research collaboration consent form proforma

Paper 5

**PhD by published works**
**Research Collaboration Consent Form**

In order to establish a *prima facie* case application for **PhD by published works**, I need to include a signed statement indicating the extent of the contribution by other collaborating researchers with reference to the contribution to design, analysis, conduct of the research and writing up/creation of the publication.

Please review the following statement in full and provide your written consent by completing the table and inserting your signature / date.

1. Research Collaborator Name: *Dr Anthony Kent*
2. Research title: **"Change in technology-enabled omnichannel customer experiences in-store"**
3. Research publication: *Journal of Retailing & Consumer Services (under review)*

4. Lead researcher / author: *Bethan Alexander*

5. Statement of the nature and extent of relative contribution:

   a. Research design: *Led by Alexander*
   b. Research analysis: *Joint collaboration by Kent and Alexander*
   c. Conduct of the research: Led by Alexander
   d. Write-up / advancement of the publication: *Completed by Alexander*
   e. *Overall Alexander was responsible for c.75% of the paper.*

|  | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| I agree with the statement of research contribution given | x | |
| I agree with the published work being used as part of the application for PhD by publication by the lead author | x | |

Signature:

Date: 15/06/20

1    | Research collaboration consent form proforma

Paper 6

**PhD by published works**
**Research Collaboration Consent Form**

In order to establish a *prima facie* case application for **PhD by published works**, I need to include a signed statement indicating the extent of the contribution by other collaborating researchers with reference to the contribution to design, analysis, conduct of the research and writing up/creation of the publication.

Please review the following statement in full and provide your written consent by completing the table and inserting your signature / date.

1. Research Collaborator Name: *Marta Blazquez Cano*

2. Research title: "Alexander, B., Blazquez Cano, M. (2018) Futurising the physical store in the omnichannel retail environment.

3. Research publication: In Piotrowicz, W. and Cuthbertson, R. Eds. Exploring Omnichannel Retailing: Common expectations and diverse realities. Springer Press.

*4.* Lead researcher / author: *Bethan Alexander*

5. Statement of the nature and extent of relative contribution:

   a. Research design: *Led by Alexander*
   b. Research analysis: *Led by Alexander*
   c. Conduct of the research: Led by Alexander
   d. Write-up / advancement of the publication: *Led by Alexander.*
   e. *Overall, Alexander was responsible for c.75% of the paper*

|  | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| I agree with the statement of research contribution given | x | |
| I agree with the published work being used as part of the application for PhD by publication by the lead author | x | |

Signature:

Date: **5/1/2018**

1    | Research collaboration consent form proforma

**PhD by published works
Research Collaboration Consent Form**

In order to establish a *prima facie* case application for **PhD by published works**, I need to include a signed statement indicating the extent of the contribution by other collaborating researchers with reference to the contribution to design, analysis, conduct of the research and writing up/creation of the publication.

Please review the following statement in full and provide your written consent by completing the table and inserting your signature / date.

1.  Research Collaborator Name: *Marta Blazquez Cano*

    Research title: "Alexander, B., Blazquez Cano, M. (2019), Store of the future: Towards a (re)invention and (re)imagination of physical store space in an omnichannel context.

    Research publication: Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services

1.  Lead researcher / author: *Bethan Alexander*

2.  Statement of the nature and extent of relative contribution:

    a.  Research design: *Led by Alexander*
    b.  Research analysis: *Led by Alexander*
    c.  Conduct of the research: Led by Alexander
    d.  Write-up / advancement of the publication: *Led by Alexander.*
    e.  *Overall, Alexander was responsible for c.75% of the paper*

|  | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| I agree with the statement of research contribution given | x | |
| I agree with the published work being used as part of the application for PhD by publication by the lead author | x | |

Signature:

Date: 14/8/19

1      | Research collaboration consent form proforma

# Appendix 2: Cited publications

Citations for the paper's comprising the body of work, as of 24 November 2021.

| Paper No. | Reference | No. citations | Citation, indicative journals |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Alexander, B. and Kent, A. (2017) 'Retail Environments.' *In* Petermans, A., Kent, A. (eds.) *Retail Design*. Routledge Publishing, pp. 62-86. ISBN: 9781472467836. | 11 | Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management; International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management. |
| 2 | Alexander, B. (2019) 'Commerce, culture and experience convergence: fashion's third places', *Journal of Services Marketing*, 33(3), pp. 257-272. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-04-2018-0116 | 17 | Journal of Services Marketing; International Journal of Advertising; International Journal of Quality and Service Science; International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management. |
| 3 | Alexander, B. and Olivares Alvarado, D. (2017) 'Convergence of physical and virtual retail spaces: the influence of technology on consumer in-store experience.' *In* Vecchi, A. (ed.) *Advanced Fashion Technology and Operations Management*. IGI Global, pp. 191-219. ISBN13: 9781522518655 Chapter DOI:10.4018/978-1-5225-1865-5.ch008 | 17 | Journal of Retailing & Consumer Services; International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management; Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC. |
| 4 | Alexander, B. and Kent, A. (2021) 'Tracking technology diffusion in-store: a fashion retail perspective.' *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management,* 49(10), pp. 1369-1390. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-05-2020-0191 | 4 | Zone Moda Journal |
| 5 | Alexander, B. and Kent, A. (2020) 'Change in technology-enabled omnichannel customer experiences in-store.' *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*. (In press, available online 14 Oct 2020) https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102338 | 11 | Journal of Retailing & Consumer Services; Frontiers in Psychology; Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management; International Journal of Business Marketing and Management. |
| 6 | Alexander, B. and Blázquez Cano, M. (2019) 'Futurising the physical store in the omnichannel retail environment.' *In* Piotrowicz, W. and Cuthbertson, R. (eds.) | 22 | Journal of Retailing & Consumer Services; International Journal of Retail & Distribution |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Exploring Omnichannel Retailing: Common expectations and diverse realities*. Springer Press, pp. 197-223. ISBN 978-3-319-98272-4. | | Management; International Journal of Consumer Studies; International Journal of Advertising. |
| 7 | Alexander, B. and Blázquez Cano, M. (2019) 'Store of the future: towards a (re)invention and (re)imagination of physical store space in an omnichannel context.' *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 55, pp.1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.101913 | 49 | California Management Review; Journal of Business Research; Journal of Retailing & Consumer Services, International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management; Frontiers in Psychology. |

Google scholar profile