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## **Customer Journey: Online Versus Offline in Fashion Industry**

Raquel Filipa Duarte Tapadinhas

Master in Management

Supervisor:

Prof. Dr. João Geraldes, Assistant Professor, ISCTE Business School, Department of Marketing, Operations and General Management

Co-Supervisor:

Prof. Dr. Leandro Pereira, Assistant Professor, ISCTE Business School, Department of Marketing, Operations and General Management

October, 2021



**BUSINESS  
SCHOOL**

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Department of Marketing, Operations and General Management

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## Resumo

As melhorias tecnológicas têm vindo a permitir o desenvolvimento da experiência do consumidor tanto online como offline e o objetivo é criar uma melhor experiência. Hoje em dia, os consumidores podem decidir comprar produtos/ serviços de duas formas diferentes, ou seja, online ou offline. A experiência online tem vindo a mudar a forma como as empresas chegam ao consumidor, enquanto que a experiência em loja é a forma tradicional de compra.

Este estudo analisa a jornada do consumidor e os atributos mais importantes quando o consumidor quer comprar um produto e tem de escolher entre os dois canais na indústria da moda, em Portugal. É importante entender porque é que os consumidores escolhem um canal ao invés do outro e se a combinação dos dois canais pode melhorar a experiência do consumidor.

A indústria da moda é muito competitiva; portanto é necessário inovar constantemente e integrar ambos os canais, com o uso de tecnologias, como a realidade virtual. Nesta indústria, os elementos sensoriais são cruciais e é necessário que esses elementos também estejam presentes no canal online. A combinação dos canais online e offline, com a ajuda da tecnologia, poderá ser a melhor opção para os consumidores?

Foram feitas entrevistas e realizada uma análise qualitativa. As principais conclusões indicam que os elementos sensoriais são essenciais quando os consumidores desejam comprar uma peça de roupa e, esse é um dos motivos pelos quais os consumidores, em geral, preferem comprar offline. Adicionalmente, o uso de tecnologias para aproximar os dois canais parece ser uma boa opção.

Palavras-chave: Jornada do Consumidor, Experiência do Consumidor, Experiência Digital do Consumidor, Experiência em Loja, Online versus Offline, Indústria da Moda

Sistema de Classificação JEL: M31 Marketing, L81 Comércio Retalhista e Grossista; Comércio Eletrónico

## **Abstract**

Technological improvements are allowing the development of the customer experience both online and offline, and the purpose is to create a better experience. Nowadays, customers can decide to purchase products/ services in two different ways, i.e., online or offline. The online experience has been changing the way companies reach the customer, while in-store experience is the traditional way of purchasing.

This study analyses the customer journey and the most important attributes when the customer wants to purchase a product and has to choose between the two channels in the fashion industry, in Portugal. It is important to understand why customers choose a channel instead of the other one, and if the combination of the two channels can improve customer experience.

The fashion industry is very competitive; therefore it is necessary to constantly innovative and integrate both channels, with the use of technologies, such as virtual reality. In this industry, sensory elements are crucial, and it is necessary that these elements are also present in the online channel. Can the combination of online and offline channels be the best option for customers with the help of technology?

Interviews were conducted and a qualitative analysis was carried out. The main findings indicate that sensory elements are essential when customers what to purchase a clothing item and that is one of the reasons that customers, in general, prefer to purchase offline. Moreover, using new technologies to bring the two channels together seems to be a good option.

Key-Words: Customer Journey, Customer Experience, Digital Customer Experience, In-store Experience, Online versus Offline, Fashion Industry

JEL Classification System: M31 Marketing, L81 Retail and Wholesale Trade; E-Commerce

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## **List of Abbreviations**

User Interface (UI)

User experience (UX)

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

European Union (EU)

Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT)

Buy Online Pick Up In-Store (BOPS)

Research Questions (RQ)

Research Objectives (RO)

Interview Questions (IQ)



## 1. Introduction

The growth of electronic commerce gives the customer a chance to choose to purchase the same product/ service online or in a physical store. Therefore, it is crucial to understand what is behind the choice of purchasing online or offline and how to combine the two channels to provide the best customer experience.

The customer journey usually starts on digital channels, where the possibility to access product information and to purchase the product/service can be done in few steps (E-Commerce Report, 2020).

According to Marketest, in 2019, Internet use increased and reached its highest point (74.6%) in Portugal. Portuguese population's involvement with online shopping is increasing, meaning that online shopping is part of the daily lives of Portuguese people (51% of Internet users made online purchases in 2019 (E-Commerce Report, 2020)). According to the E-commerce Report (2020), in Portugal, in terms of age group, the 25 – 44 years are the predominant (56,1%) age range that purchase more on the Internet, and in terms of localization, the focus are the two main metropolitan areas (Lisbon and Porto). The main reasons given by Portuguese consumers to purchase online were the easiness of purchasing compared to physical stores, the convenience of purchasing anytime, and the lower price and promotions that are usually present in the online channel (E-Commerce Report, 2020).

The growth of online shopping in Portugal is transversal to almost all the categories, and the most purchased product category in 2019 was *“Clothing and Footwear”* (E-Commerce Report, 2020). According to PORDATA, in 2018, the final consumption expenses of households, in Portugal, in clothing and footwear were 8.419,3 million euros and it has been increasing from year to year.

It is an era of technology, therefore, people want to use that technology evolution and purchase online, but some customers still prefer to buy offline because they do not trust online websites (Jeeva & Suthamathi, 2020).

It is fundamental to understand what motivates customers to use a specific channel in the fashion industry, more specifically on clothing. Also, there is a need to identify how customers feel when they interact with a company, both online and offline, and understand the different needs that each customer has. Consequently, it is important to analyse the customer journey and all the experience that a customer has during the process of purchasing in this specific industry.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Customer Experience**

Schmitt (1999) was one of the first that focused on the importance of customer experience and Pine and Gilmore (1998) addressed the importance of experience, stating that customers want experiences instead of just products, and are willing to pay more for that. Also, the same authors mentioned before addressed the opportunities for companies to benefit in creating a strong and durable customer experience. Customer experience comprehends all the aspects of a company's offering, including the quality of customer care, advertising, packaging, product and service features, ease of use, and reliability (Meyer & Schwager, 2007).

There are several interpretations of customer experience, and all of them are valid, however, some can be more suitable for a specific situation or industry. Meyer and Schwager (2007) affirmed that customer experience is the response customers have to direct or indirect contact with a company. De Keyser *et al.* (2015) describe customer experience as a set of cognitive, emotional, physical, sensorial, and social elements that affect the client indirect or direct interaction with other market players. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) concluded that customer experience focuses on the customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social responses to the company's offerings throughout the customer's purchase journey.

### **2.2 Customer Journey**

The customer journey is a way for analysing the customer's experiential world (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2011) and describes all touch points that the customer has with the company and other stakeholders during the journey (Weber & Chatzopoulos, 2019). Those touch points are an exact moment in time when a customer interacts with a company or assets of a company (Weber & Chatzopoulos, 2019).

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) affirmed that the customer experience is a journey between the customer and the company through the purchase cycle in the several touch points. They also affirmed that the customer experience is a dynamic process and is composed of three stages: prepurchase (including research), purchase, and postpurchase. The prepurchase stage includes all the aspects related to the customer's experience from the beginning of the need/ goal/ impulse recognition to the consideration of satisfying that need/ goal/ impulse

with the purchase (Hoyer, 1984; Pieters *et al.*, 1995). The purchase stage includes all the customer interactions with the company and its environment, and it is characterized by attitudes such as choice, ordering, and payment (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The last stage, the postpurchase, is focused on consumption experience and includes behaviours such as usage and consumption, postpurchase engagement, and service requests (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) identified four categories of customer experience touch points: brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned, and social/ external/ independent. The authors argued the importance of each touch point may be different at each stage, depending on the nature of the product/ service or the customer's journey. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) define the four categories as:

Brand-owned touch points – customer interactions during the experience managed and controlled by the company. It includes all brand-owned media (e.g. advertising, websites, loyalty programs) and brand-controlled elements of the marketing mix, such as attributes of product, packaging, price, convenience, and service;

Partner-owned touch points – customer interactions during the experience that are designed, managed, or controlled by the company and other, such as marketing agents, and multichannel distribution partners;

Customer-owned touch points – customer actions that are part of the entire customer experience, but the company and its partners or others do not influence or control;

Social/ external/ independent touch points – are related to other significant functions in the customer experience. During the experience, customers have several external touch points that can influence the process.

Nowadays, customers interact with companies through a variety of touch points in several channels and media (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Thus, it is complex for companies to create, manage, and control the experience and journey of each customer (Edelman & Singer, 2015; Rawson *et al.*, 2013).

### **2.3 Digital Customer Journey**

At this moment, the customer journey is highly affected by social media and mobile applications, and the digital customer journey contains several marketing touch points (Papakonstantinidis, 2017). Consumers use social networking platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, journals (weblogs), forums and virtual gaming worlds (Papakonstantinidis,

2017). One of the most important characteristics of social networking platforms is the sense of community that it is not present in traditional websites (Papakonstantinidis, 2017). Digital customers are becoming more familiar and comfortable with the use of Internet, and they want that companies interact with them (Papakonstantinidis, 2017). Papakonstantinidis (2017) defended that the website is the starting point where customers can explore and learn about the company and product/service.

### **2.3.1 User Interface**

The user interface (UI) is an intermediate between the user and the system to help in communication, interaction and information exchange (Su *et al.*, 2020). There are several UI principals suggested by Laurel and Mountford (1990), such as user oriented design, uniformity, consistency, help information, multiple views, and immediate feedback.

To have a valuable UI design it is necessary to meet the users' needs and habits (Su *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the UI must integrate a user-centric design perspective and provide an effective, efficient, secure, practical, easy to use, and memorable for users (Su *et al.*, 2020).

### **2.3.2 User Experience**

Kuniavsky (2010) affirmed that the user experience (UX) is the perception created by the user when interacting with the system, including performance, efficiency and emotional satisfaction. To have a high-quality UX, it is crucial to understand the user, think from the user's point of view and, subsequently design the system and product to be user-centric (Su *et al.*, 2020). Thus, websites with effective visual, navigation, and information designs can increase consumers' return to the website (Hasan, 2016).

## **2.4 Importance of Technologies in Customer Experience**

The recent technological improvements are changing the way people experience physical and virtual environments (Flavián *et al.*, 2019). The purpose of using technologies is to make the shopping experience more pleasurable and enjoyable for customers (Alexander & Alvarado, 2017), and to create an integrated experience between channels (Blazquez, 2014). Consumers do not think about the technology itself, but how the Internet can improve the customer experience and make better decisions (Burke, 2002). The customer experience in almost every company will change (Hoyer *et al.*, 2020), and throughout the customer journey, new touch points will be created and the existing ones will be reconstructed (Hoyer *et al.*, 2020). New technologies will influence how customers search for products and

services, evaluate options, make decisions, and consume them (Libai *et al.*, 2020). Also, emerging technologies will create value for customers, and companies will increase that value by continuously build and mold technologies interactions having in mind customer-centric (Rangaswamy *et al.*, 2020). The presence of technology changes the layout and the store experience (Alexander & Cano, 2020), since it allows customers to have access to a more variable offer, customized services and new entertaining tools (Merle *et al.*, 2012; Pantano *et al.*, 2018).

In-store technologies facilitate the shopping process (Mosquera *et al.*, 2018), and additionally facilitate the customer interaction (Alexander & Kent, 2020). Those technologies facilitate the customer experience and the managerial processes through self-checkout (Fernandes & Pedroso, 2017; Lee, 2015), retail apps (Kim *et al.*, 2013), and provide experiences such as virtual reality and augmented reality technologies (Rese *et al.*, 2017; Watson *et al.*, 2018). Some technologies such as interactive touch screens, and self-service kiosks are used to amplify the customer experience (Alexander & Kent, 2020). In-store technologies can increase store attractiveness, pleasure, satisfaction, purchase intention and enrich the experience (Flavían *et al.*, 2020; Kim & Forsythe, 2009; Mosquera *et al.*, 2018; Pantano & Viassone, 2015).

Virtual reality is an emerging technology and consists on a representation of physical objects and spaces using high definition digital images that allow people to be “present” in a digital environment using only a headset (Biocca, 1992). By giving the customer’s brain the illusion of physical presence, they can experience places and/ or objects like if they are directly interacting with those objects (Dede, 2009). A virtual store environment, particularly when combined with multisensory elements, like auditory stimuli, can facilitate an enjoyable shopping experience for the customer (Aiello *et al.*, 2019).

Another technology to mention within this topic is artificial intelligence, which helps to make onmichannel shopping more profitable, primarily through better managing of in-store experience, improving payments, customer service, customer relationship management, and improving logistics (Shankar, 2018). Other technologies used are machine learning (Gill *et al.*, 2018) and deep learning (Cruz *et al.*, 2019). Machine learning explores the algorithms’ construction that can learn and make predictions about data (Kohavi & Provost, 1998). Deep learning is a machine learning concept (Janiesch *et al.*, 2021), and is very useful when there are large quantities of data (LeCun *et al.*, 2015).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that there could be a negative side of technologies for consumers, and that include loss of control, privacy concerns, and addiction to these technologies (Inman & Nikolova, 2017; Ng & Wakenshaw, 2017).

## **2.5 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**

Cyber theft of personal data exposes people to several risks (IT Governance Privacy Team, 2020). Big data analysis techniques allow companies to track and predict individual behaviour and can be implemented in automated decision-making (IT Governance Privacy Team, 2020).

The combination of those problems, the permanent advancement of technology and the concerns related to the misuse of personal data by governments and companies resulted in a new law that clarifies the level of protection of personal data across European Union (EU) (IT Governance Privacy Team, 2020).

The EU General Data Protection Regulation is applied to all EU Member States from 25 May 2018 and any organization anywhere in the world that provides services into the EU that involve processing personal data (IT Governance Privacy Team, 2020). The GDPR has six general data protection principles, which are fairness and lawfulness, purpose limitations, data minimisation, accuracy, store limitation, and integrity and confidentiality. However, data protection is the centre of the GDPR (Goddard, 2017).

According to the IT Governance Privacy Team (2020), the two key goals are protecting the rights, privacy and freedoms of persons in the EU and reducing barriers to business by facilitating the free movement of data across the EU.

## **2.6 Digital Customer Experience**

Online shopping has been changing the way companies reach the customer and deliver their products/ services (Punyatoya, 2019; Rose *et al.*, 2011). Customers can search for products/ services and visit the retailer's website or search for other options using a shopping search engine (Jeeva & Suthamathi, 2020). The online customer experience can be defined as the affective and cognitive evaluation of the customer's direct or indirect interaction with a company (Klaus & Maklan, 2013; Rose *et al.*, 2011), whether that experience originates from the customer's interactions with a product, the company, or a part of the company (Gentile *et al.*, 2007). In the online context, not delivering a high-quality experience can be very

prejudicial for the company (Kawaf & Tagg, 2017), since the customers have access to vast information to compare their options and control the quality of their experience (Jung & Seock, 2017). If the company does not satisfy the customer, it is predictable that the customer will change to other online retailer, and also, the dissatisfied customer can write about the negative experience on several online channels (Singh & Crisafulli, 2016; Sousa & Voss, 2009).

As in the online shopping the consumers cannot touch the product, they need to build their judgments based on the information contained on the website (Athapaththu & Kulathunga, 2018). When customers perceive a higher value in the online shopping experiences, they tend to trust in that specific website (Athapaththu & Kulathunga, 2018). Thus, quality, quantity, and relevance of information provided to customers, can increase trust in an online store (Urban *et al.*, 2000). According to Wen (2009), the quality of provided information is one of the most important aspects in an effective website.

The online customer review is useful during decision-making, because it gives to the customer the experience of a previous customer (Park *et al.*, 2007). Those authors also defended that the quality of online reviews has a positive effect on consumers purchasing intention, and purchase intention increases as the number of reviews increase.

### **2.6.1 Zero Moment of Truth**

The Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT) is the first contact that a customer has to a product or service through several social media networks (Wolny & Charoensuksai, 2014). It is where consumers make choices that affect the success or failure of several companies (Lecnski, 2011). The ZMOT approach allows companies to comprehend how potential customers search for product or service information and, consequently, increases the probability of reaching the right customer at the precise time (Aichner, 2012).

### **2.7 In-store Experience**

Shopping offline is a traditional way of purchasing products/ services, where the customer visits the store (Jeeva & Suthamathi, 2020). The in-store experience involves interactions with humans, which allow customers to have a personalized service (Bergeron *et al.*, 2005). Buying in a physical store has low risk (Hult *et al.*, 2019) and provides customers with a sensory experience, which leads to a better understanding of the quality of the product (Degeratu *et al.*, 2000).

The store environment is characterized by diverse store atmospherics that affects consumer's emotional reactions and shopping behaviour (Eroglu *et al.*, 2003). The use of different sensory elements, for example, in-store music, aromas, different textures, and lighting techniques help to create a unique environment (Kent, 2007). This type of stimulus can improve the customer's experience and also influence consumer behaviour (Clarke *et al.*, 2012). Thus, in a physical store is possible to influence diverse types of emotions and stimulate decision-making by appealing to several senses (Clarke *et al.*, 2012). Nevertheless, consumers get easily bored of the same type of stimuli; therefore, in-store experience needs to be regularly updated (Parsons, 2011). The physical store is considered a key channel for retail innovation and it is the key point of face-to-face interaction with customers (Alexander & Cano, 2020).

## **2.8 Online Versus Offline**

The customer has the opportunity to choose which channel is going to use and for that, it is important to distinguish some crucial aspects of purchasing online or offline. Services tend to correspond more with online shopping, while more tangible products with physical stores (Ganesh *et al.*, 2007).

Some benefits of purchasing online are the fact that it is cheaper, is more convenient, has a large selection, reduces processing errors, is quicker in transactions, and keeps customer anonymity (Ganesh *et al.*, 2007). However, these authors defend that some of the inconveniences of purchasing online are security doubts, lack of return policies, lack of personalization shopping, and lack of customer service. Thus, if consumers are not familiar with those benefits, they will prefer to shop in a physical store (Ganesh *et al.*, 2007).

Jeeva and Suthamathi (2020) defended that there are several risks related to purchasing online, namely, customers do not touch or feel the product. Hence, the size and colour of the product can be different when the product arrives (Jeeva & Suthamathi, 2020). Those authors also mentioned that the delivery time and the possibility of the product arriving damaged are concerns related to online purchasing. Furthermore, in this channel, the product takes several days to be delivered, and in an offline channel, the product is immediately given to the consumer (Jeeva & Suthamathi, 2020).

Physical stores have been associated with shopping security, complaint solution, warranties, and customer service (Ganesh *et al.*, 2007). Another important aspect is related to the possibility to have a face-to-face interaction with employees, which allows customers



to access personalized and trusty information (Bergeron *et al.*, 2005). The option to receive custom products/ services particularly for their needs, a reduced shopping risk, a positive store environment, and the quality of the service offered by the employees are some of the components that purchasing in a physical store has and that is difficult to have in the online channel (Hult *et al.*, 2019). In the offline context, there is a bigger sensory experience than in an online context (Degeratu *et al.*, 2000). Thus, it is easier to perceive the quality of the product/ service in a physical store (Degeratu *et al.*, 2000). Purchasing in a physical store has also some concerns, for example, it is time-consuming, the customer has to drive, park, walk and search the products, spend time talking with store employees, and stand in queues for payment (Chintagunta *et al.*, 2012; Jeeva & Suthamathi, 2020). For Jeeva and Suthamathi (2020), there are also some factors affecting offline purchasing, namely, the numbers of products available in stores are limited and sometimes the stock is old. Thus, if customers purchase in a physical store, they will have a limited number of choices (Jeeva & Suthamathi, 2020). Another important problem approached by the authors referenced above is the information provided by the store employees, because that information is not always correct and may not meet the customer's needs.

Marketers need to understand what motivates and influences customers to use a specific channel and which channels are preferred, so as to build a multichannel strategy that has in mind the customer needs in each channel interaction, with the goal to produce a positive customer experience and create maximum value to them (Grewal *et al.*, 2009).

## **2.9 Omnichannel**

The omnichannel strategy is a retailing approach and is defined as the synergy of several channels and customer touch points, so that the customer experience in all channels and also the performance of those channels is optimized (Verhoef *et al.*, 2015).

Omnichannel retailing allows merchants to identify, gather, and analyse large quantities of information about consumers, products, physical environments, interactions, and shopping context (Wang & Wu, 2014). From the customer point of view, the omnichannel retail approach allows them to use the channel that is the best for them and at their point of the customer journey to obtain relevant information that meets their needs (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

The integration of offline and online channels, related to the emergency of Internet-based marketing channels, is one of the most important changes in retail (Brynjolfsson *et al.*,

2013; Huré *et al.*, 2017). The offline channel is progressively integrated with online channel to give a connected and personal experience in the customer's journey (Alexander, 2019; Blazquez, 2014; Fernández *et al.*, 2018; Mosquera *et al.*, 2018).

Retailers who use technologies to improve the customer experience tend to be more successful (Blazquez, 2014; Foroudi *et al.*, 2018), particularly from a customers' perspective on what they use and how these technologies affect the customer shopping experience in the omnichannel retail context (Savastano *et al.*, 2019).

Omnichannel retailing complicates customer experience management for companies, because they have to manage relationships between different channels in order to deliver an excellent omnichannel customer experience (Fan *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, companies need to be efficient when coordinating and organizing the relationship between online and offline channels (Fan *et al.*, 2021). Omnichannel management aims to reduce the difference between online and offline channels, improving service quality (Hossain *et al.*, 2020).

#### **2.10 Buy Online Pick Up In-Store**

With the development of electronic commerce, new consumption patterns appear and allow customers to use the strategy of Buy Online and Pick Up In-Store (BOPS) (Kim *et al.*, 2017). Customers can first search for the product/service they want online and, then check if it is in stock in a specific store (Kim *et al.*, 2017). If it is in stock, the customer can purchase online and pick up in the physical store of their choice (Kim *et al.*, 2017).

The customer can initiate the purchase transaction in one channel and complete on another channel, which means, order online and pick up at store (Chatterjee, 2010). This strategy helps retailers to offer a larger variety of products and can reduce shipping cost for customers (Lin *et al.*, 2020), which leads to a channel synergy and attracts more customers (Zhang *et al.*, 2019).

#### **2.11 Showrooming and Webrooming**

Webrooming and showrooming have become usual practices in omnichannel customer behaviour (Flavián *et al.*, 2020) and several studies show that the Internet is the preferred information source and the physical store is the main purchase channel (Alba *et al.*, 1997; Dholakia *et al.*, 2005; Fernández *et al.*, 2018; Verhoef *et al.*, 2007; Yadav & Pavlou, 2014).

Showrooming is when customers search information in physical stores and then purchase products/services online (Schneider & Zielke, 2020; Teixeira & Gupta, 2015; Balakrishnan *et al.*, 2014). Webrooming is when the customers first search information and find the product/service on the Internet that best match their needs, and then go to a physical store to confirm that information and purchase the product/service (Flavián *et al.*, 2016).

Webrooming and showrooming threaten multichannel retailers because consumers use one retailer's channel in their planning, and then, change to another retailer's channel to make the purchase (Chiou *et al.*, 2012; Chiu *et al.*, 2011). The combination of the two channels affects positively the consumer perceptions of service quality, and also the attitudes towards retailers (Pantano & Viassone, 2015), and that leads to a positive purchasing behaviour and customer experience (Blom *et al.*, 2017; Sit *et al.*, 2018).

Customers who use various channels, purchase more products, and spend more than customers that only use one channel (Fernández *et al.*, 2018; Lee & Kim, 2008; Baal & Dach, 2005).

Customers who want convenience, combine the channels to maximize shopping efficiency (Kang, 2018; Noble *et al.*, 2005). The Internet saves time and effort when searching for information, and the physical store offers the immediate possession of the product/service (Heitz-Spahn, 2013; Kaufman-Scarborough & Lindquist, 2002). However, customers can visit physical stores to search for alternatives and then purchase the product online to avoid crowds and long queues (Gensler *et al.*, 2017), thus obtaining purchasing efficiency (Flavián *et al.*, 2020).

## **2.12 Aggregators**

Aggregators such as Google, Kayak, Expedia and Farfetch improve consumers' search experience by giving a quick and comprehensive view of all available products, resulting in a better match between the customers needs and products (Akca & Rao, 2020). Aggregators also give to the customer the possibility to discover new or unusual products (Akca & Rao, 2020). However, a company that is not part of an aggregator has a risk of not being discovered by customers (Akca & Rao, 2020). On the other hand, several companies ignore aggregators and sell directly to consumers, but this happens only if the company has more market power and prefers not to be part of an aggregator, as they facilitate price comparison and increase price competition (Akca & Rao, 2020).

### 2.13 Fashion Industry - Clothing

The term fashion generally includes any product or market where a style element is present, and is typically short-lived (Christopher *et al.*, 2004).

“Fashion” is a cross-sector concept (Brun *et al.*, 2008), that is applicable to the clothing industry, but also to companies that are present in other sectors, such as shoes, accessories, leather goods, and jewellery (Brun & Castelli, 2008).

The fashion industry is characterized by intense competition, where it is necessary to have innovative processes that help the market growth, maintaining the competitive advantage and exploring new product sectors and consumers (Lewis & Hawksley, 1990; Birtwistle & Freathy, 1998; Moore & Fairhurst, 2003; Kay, 2006).

Clothing is a highly involvement product category, related to personal ego (Keng Kau *et al.*, 2003), therefore the products need to be seen, felt and touched (Citrin, 2003). In the fashion industry, sensory elements are especially important, since consumers look for entertainment when they purchase clothing (Drapers, 2011). Therefore, the in-store experience must provide a convenient, calming, and fun environment that makes shopping an enjoyable experience (Chu & Lam, 2007), and it seems that technology could contribute to that (Blazquez, 2014).

Fashion companies give importance to the store environment in order to create a shopping experience and develop their brands (Blazquez, 2014). Despite the importance of physical stores, in recent years, there has been a development regarding to electronic commerce in fashion products (Guercini *et al.*, 2018). The importance of retail atmosphere is also crucial in the online environment (Puccinelli *et al.*, 2009), and websites can use similar atmospheres as in the traditional stores (Menon & Kahn, 2002). Using similar atmospheres can increase the level of pleasure felt by the customer (Eroglu *et al.*, 2003), and directly influence purchase intention (Yang & Young, 2009).

There has been a need to integrate online and offline channels, given rise to new omnichannel strategies (Brynjolfsson *et al.*, 2013; Verhoef *et al.*, 2015). To fill the gap between the two channels, there are some technologies such as augmented reality and 3D virtual models that are being used to improve the online experience (Drapers, 2011).

Digital fashion technology includes augmented reality visualization technology, that is the overlaying of a virtual outfit on a model (Javornik, 2016). In-store virtual mirror technology is a form of augmented reality that increases the in-store convenience (Perry, 2016). The virtual mirrors have also an impact related to the facilitation of the customer

experience in the adaptation of the virtual “world” (Yaoyuneyong *et al.*, 2014). Consumers may be willing to pay more to use models to see how clothes look like when purchasing online (Kim & Forsythe, 2008), and also, models can increase entertainment, perceived value, and satisfaction (Shim & Lee, 2011; and Merle *et al.*, 2012).

Table 2.1 – Main Issues, Research Questions and Research Objectives. Source: Own elaboration, 2021.

Main issues	Author(s)	Year	Research Questions (RQ)	Research Objective (RO)
Online privacy concerns, and their impact when customers decide to purchase in that specific channel	Ganesh <i>et al.</i>	2007	DQ1. Do customers feel safe when purchasing in the online channel and, are there any websites where customers feel safer than others?	RO1. Analyse how online privacy concerns affect channel decision.
	Ng & Wakenshaw	2017		
	Inman & Nikolova	2017		
Incompleteness of online experience, namely sensory elements	Degeratu <i>et al.</i>	2000	RQ2. What are the reasons for customers to purchase offline instead of online? RQ3. Do consumers have a better	RO2. Analyse whether to have a pleasant customer experience is necessary to have sensory elements

			experience when receiving sensory stimulation?	involved. RO3. Identify the characteristics that make the consumer decide to purchase offline.
	Drapers	2011		
	Jeeva & Suthamathi	2020		
Offline time consuming	Chintagunta <i>et al.</i>	2012	RQ4. What are the reasons for customers to purchase online instead of offline?	RO4. Identify the characteristics that make the consumer purchase online.
	Jeeva & Suthamathi	2020		
Management and combination of different channels	Verhoef <i>et al.</i>	2015	RQ5. Does the consumer believe that the combination of the two channels can bring a better experience?	RO5. Understand if the combination of the two channels improves their experience and, if yes, how they combine.

	Blom <i>et al.</i>	2017		
	Sit <i>et al.</i>	2018		
Use of new technologies in order to create a better customer experience	Drapers	2011	RQ6. Will the customer experience be improved by using new technologies?	RO.7 Analyse the importance that consumers give to new technologies when purchasing a clothing piece.
	Merle <i>et al.</i>	2012		
	Blazquez	2014		
	Mosquera <i>et al.</i>	2018		
	Alexander & Kent	2020		

### **3. Methodology**

The literature indicates several aspects related to the choice of purchasing online versus offline. Therefore, it is essential to confirm those aspects and analyse if they are the same, specifically in the clothing sector, in Portugal. To develop the dissertation, it was considered essential to understand what motivates the customer to use a specific channel, what are the main attributes for each channel in the specific sector, if the two channels can be combined, and also the importance of new technologies in the customer experience. Considering that, it is relevant to use a qualitative method to understand what are the factors that influence customers to purchase online or offline, their experience, and what are the critical touch points in their journey. This research employs a qualitative approach using a semi-structured interview. Qualitative methods allow describing what is observed and provide an in-depth description that is impossible to obtain in other methods (Tetnowski & Damico, 2001). Using a qualitative method, it is possible to describe factors that are not easily suitable for quantification, although crucial for understanding complex social actions (Tetnowski & Damico, 2001). A qualitative research method produces a detailed description of participants' feelings, thoughts, opinions, experiences, and also interprets the significance of their actions (Rahman, 2016).

In the interview, participants were asked to have in mind the purchase of a clothing piece. All participants in this interview had to fulfil one criterion: have already purchased online and in a physical store. The sample size was 25 participants and the interviews were composed by a total of 11 open questions, and lasted 15-20 minutes. Data was analysed with the help of KH Coder software.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. All interviews were conducted in Portuguese, and then translated to English. The participants were informed that the interview would be recorded and all agreed with the audio recording.



#### 4. Findings and Discussion

Table 4.1 – Gender. Source: Own elaboration based on KH Coder, 2021.

Gender	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Female	16	64%
Male	9	36%

In the interview sample, 16 participants were females (64%) and 9 were males (36%).

Table 4.2 – Age Group. Source: Own elaboration, 2021.

Age Group	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
18-25	12	48%
26-35	5	20%
36-45	3	12%
46-55	3	12%
56-65	2	8%
> 65	0	0%

Regarding age (table 4.2), the age group with the highest number of participants was 18-25 (48%), followed by the 26-35 age group (20%). The age groups 36-45 and 46-55 represented both 12%, and only 8% of participants were in age 56-65 years.

Almost all the participants live in Lisbon and Setúbal districts. Regarding literacy abilities, 9 participants (36%) have a Bachelor degree, 8 (32%) have High School, 5 (20%) a Master degree, and 3 (12%) Middle School. 18 participants (72%) are employed, 6 (24%) are students, and 1 (4%) unemployed.

Starting with the analysis of the first research question ***“Do customers feel safe when purchasing in the online channel, and are there any websites where customers feel safer than others?”***, the majority of participants affirmed that they feel more secure when purchasing offline and it is possible to affirm that most participants, when they want to purchase online, they choose official brand websites (16 responses) because they have more confidence and feel more secure. Only one participant affirmed that just buys in aggregators, 7 participants purchase in official brand websites and aggregators, and the

decision is related with where it is cheaper. Contrary to what Akca and Rao (2020) defended, the participants do not feel that purchasing in aggregators has such benefits (like quick view of all available products, and discovery of new products) or improve the experience, in fact, Participant 3 affirmed *“I buy in official brand websites, because I like to know what product I am buying, and I have more confidence in the product because I know the store/brand”*. The majority of participants do not feel safe purchasing in aggregators websites and prefer purchasing in physical stores in terms of security, which is defended by Ganesh *et al.* that stated physical stores are associated with security. Also, Ng and Wakenshaw (2017), and Inman and Nikolova (2017) declared that technologies can have a negative side, and one of the problems are privacy concerns. Even with GDPR, participants do not feel completely secure about purchasing online, and are afraid that their personal data and their credit cards information will be disclosed.

Regarding the second research question ***“What are the reasons for customers to purchase offline instead of online?”*** the analysis showed a variety of aspects (figure 4.1).

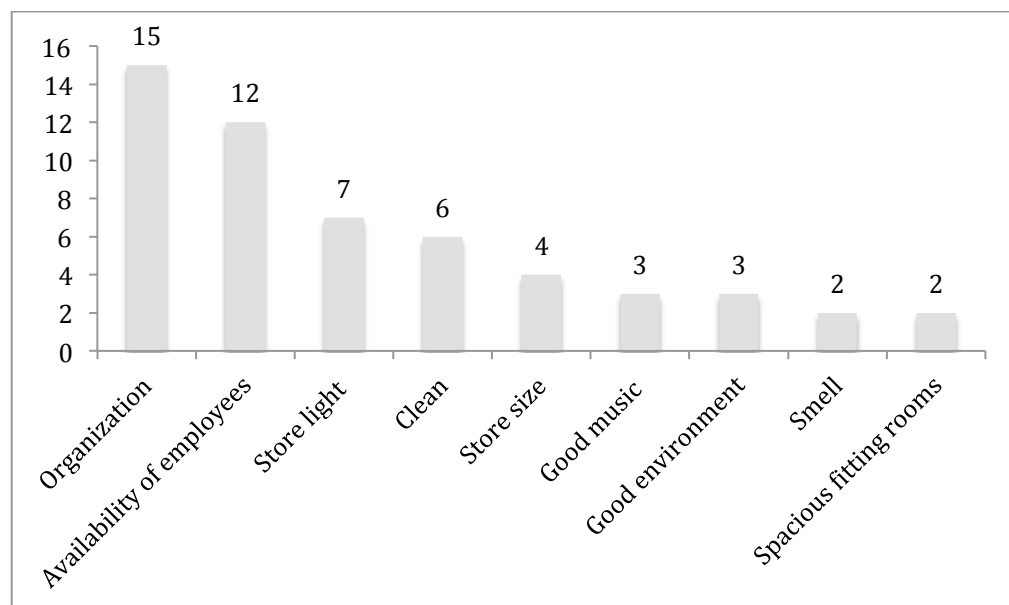


Figure 4.1 – 9 most important characteristics in a physical store. Source: Own elaboration, 2021.

Some characteristics that participants enjoy the most in a physical store related to sensory elements, such as light, music, environment and smell, are in line with the literature, and several authors argue that this type of characteristics helps to create a unique environment

(Kent, 2007), improves the consumer experience (Clarke *et al.*, 2012), and also affects shopping behaviour (Eroglu *et al.*, 2003). The most important characteristic mentioned in a physical store was the organization (15 responses), as it can be see in figure 4.1, and the interaction with employees was the second most mentioned characteristic (12 responses). Customers like to have that type of interaction, it helps them during the purchase process, and that is defended by Bergeron *et al.* (2005). However, Jeeva and Suthamathi (2020) affirmed that employee interaction could be a problem because the information provided by store employees is not always correct. Some participants who like to have interaction with employees also mentioned that the interaction could be negative. Participant number 7 said *“I really appreciate the interaction with the employees. Sometimes it leads us to buy the clothing piece because the staff is willing to help. Usually the interaction is positive, but it also happened to me to have a negative interaction, and then I leave the store without buying anything”*. Other important characteristics mentioned in the interviews were the store light (7 participants), the store cleanliness (6 participants), store size (4 participants), good music (3 participants), good environment (3 participants), 2 participants mentioned the smell and other 2 the spacious fitting rooms.

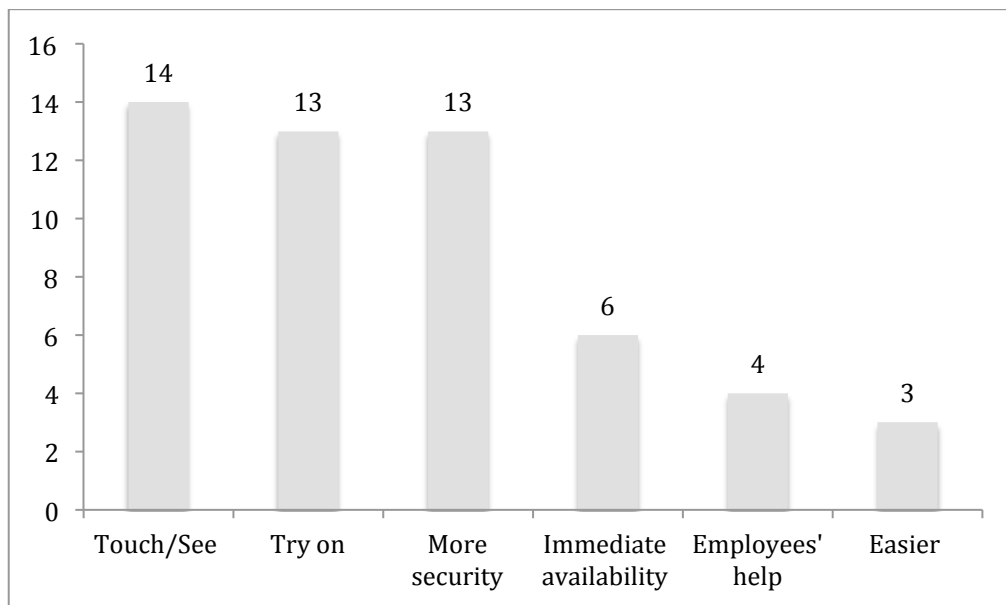


Figure 4.2 – 6 most important reasons for purchasing offline instead of online. Source: Own elaboration, 2021.

Considering the reasons of purchasing offline instead of online, the majority of them are related also with sensory elements, such as see and touch the piece (14 responses), and try

on the piece (13 responses). Degeratu *et al.* (2000) stated that there is a bigger sensory experience in a physical store than in the online store. Also, in the fashion industry, the sensory elements are even more important (Drapers, 2011). Other important reason given by participants, observed in figure 4.2, is the security of purchasing offline (13 responses). Ganesh *et al.* (2007) defended that a physical store is associated with privacy and security. There are also participants who affirmed “*I’m afraid to put my personal data on the Internet*” (Participant 5), “*I am afraid of security, the transmission of my data. Regarding data protection, shopping in physical stores is more favourable because we have more privacy*” (Participant 7). Even with GDPR, participants do not feel safe when purchasing online and it is one of the main reasons for preferring to purchase offline. The fourth reason of purchasing offline instead of online is the immediate availability of product and that reason is mention in the literature review by Jeeva and Suthamathi (2020). Other reasons less mentioned were employees’ help (4 responses), and the easiness of purchasing offline (3 responses).

The customer experience is composed by three stages, and the last one is the postpurchase stage (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Therefore, it is important to understand if there are any postpurchase services important for consumers after purchasing a piece of clothing. In the interview analysis, it can be concluded that the exchange and return policies are postpurchase services that the majority of participants mentioned (20 responses). Nevertheless, they feel that is more difficult and confusing to do the return and/or exchange in the online channel, which is in line with the literature, because an inconvenient of purchasing online is the lack of return policies (Ganesh *et al.*, 2007). Also, participants affirmed that in the online context, they do not know whom they need to contact, and sometimes it is necessary to pay extra fees. Interviewee 4 affirmed, “*Regarding the return policies, I feel like it is easier if I buy in a physical store because sometimes it is hard to return online, it can be confusing. In a physical store, I go there, go talk to the employee and exchange or return the product*”. About half of the participants stated that if they purchase online, they want to know the returns policies but if they purchase offline they do not worry about it. 5 participants affirmed that they do not have any type of concerns regarding post-purchase services.

Referring to the third research question **“Do consumers have a better experience when receiving sensory stimulation?”**, it can be affirmed that most of participants feel that sensory stimulation is a very important aspect, especially when purchasing a clothing piece.

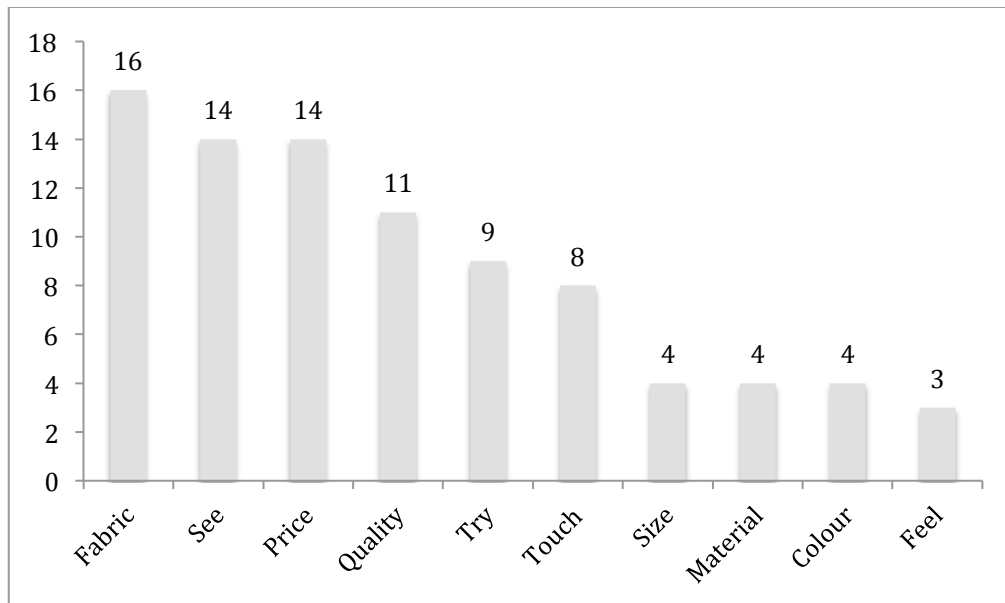


Figure 4.3 - 10 of the most frequently used words in the interview question *“What do you evaluate to know if that piece is ideal for you?”* Source: Own elaboration based on Online Utility Website, 2021.

Regarding what factors participants evaluate to know if the piece of clothing is ideal, the figure 4.3 was made for the 10 most mentioned words in the question 2 of the interview (Appendix A), and it can be seen above that the most frequently used word was “fabric”, followed by “see”, “price”, “quality”, “try”, and “touch”. It can be observed that the majority of responses were related to the sensory elements, such as touch and see the fabric, the quality of the fabric, and try on the piece. Thus, to have that type of sensory experience, it is necessary to purchase in a physical store (Degeratu *et al.*, 2000). Other important words mentioned were size (4 participants), material (4 participants), colour (4 participants), and feel (3 participants). All of those words are related to touching the piece of clothing, which is one of the sensory elements.

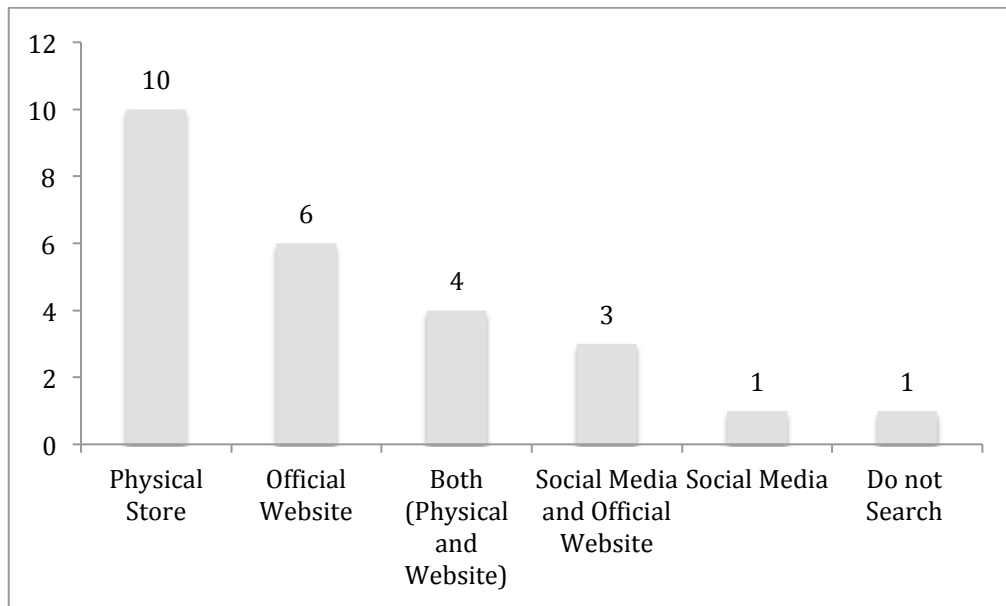


Figure 4.4 – Sources of information search place before purchasing a piece of clothing.

Source: Own elaboration, 2021.

When participants want to research information about a product before purchasing it (figure 4.4), 10 participants search information in the physical store, mainly because they can see and touch the product, which is in line with Degeratu *et al.* (2000). Furthermore, Drapers (2011) affirmed that in the fashion industry, sensory elements are crucial. Moreover, there are technologies such as 3D virtual models that are being used to increase the online customer experience (Drapers, 2011), and that could bring the online experience closer to the in-store experience, especially in the sensory elements aspect. 6 participants search in the official websites, 4 in both channels, 3 in social media and official websites, 1 only in social media, and 1 simply do not search.

Research question four is ***“What are the reasons for customers to purchase online instead of offline?”*** and there are several answers given by participants. As mentioned in the literature review, quality, quantity and relevance of information can increase trust in the online channel (Urban *et al.*, 2000) and the quality of that information is a crucial aspect in a website (Wen, 2009).

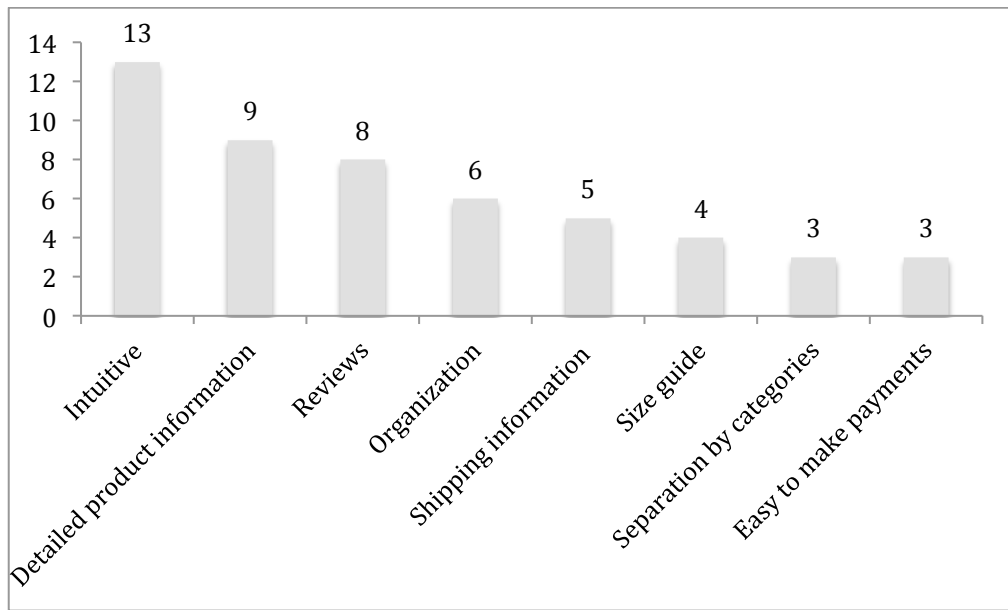


Figure 4.5 – 8 most important characteristics in an online store. Source: Own elaboration, 2021.

The most important characteristic given by participants in an online store was the intuitive website (13 responses), followed by detailed product information (9 responses), so they can learn more about the piece and understand if it is really what they are looking for. Another important key characteristic in an online store mentioned by participants are the reviews from previous customers, and for Park *et al.* (2007), online reviews are helpful in the decision-making process and the quality of online reviews has a positive result in the consumers purchasing intention. Other characteristics mentioned were website organization (6 responses), information about shipping (5 responses), size guides (4 responses), separation by categories (3 responses), and easy to make payments (3 responses).

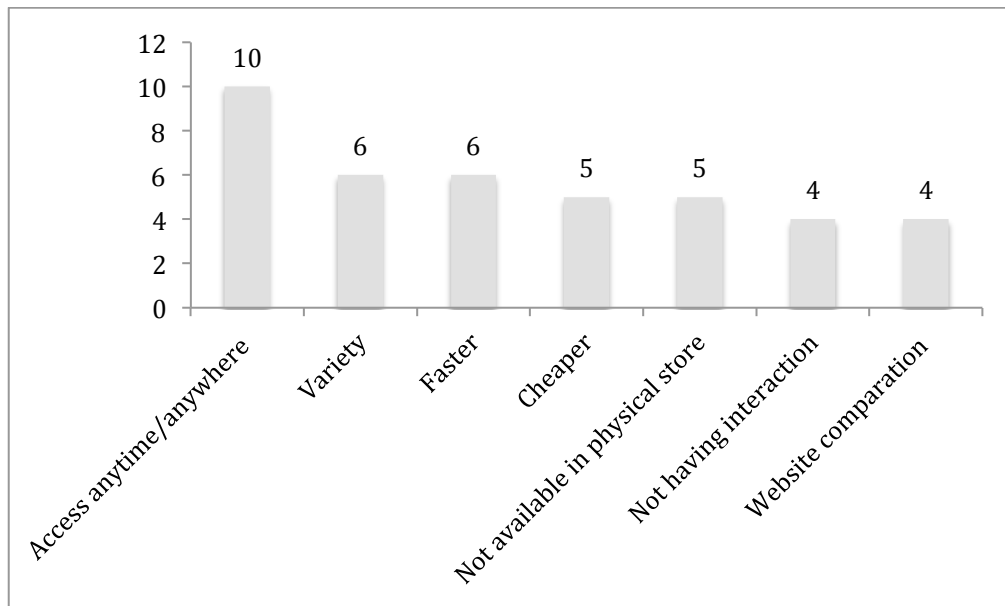


Figure 4.6 – 7 most important reasons for purchasing online instead of offline. Source: Own elaboration, 2021.

Regarding the reasons for interview participants to purchase in the online channel instead of offline channel, it can be said that Ganesh *et al.* (2007) mentioned several of them, such as convenience, variety, quickness, and lower prices. The convenience is directly related to the ease of purchasing anywhere and anytime (10 responses). The variety and more available products (6 responses), and the less time customers spend when purchasing (6 responses) were the second most mentioned characteristics and Chintagunta *et al.* (2012), and Jeeva and Suthamathi (2020) defended that purchasing in physical stores takes more time. Other reasons were the reduced price (5 responses), when it is not available in a physical store (5 responses), not having interaction with people, especially with employees (4 responses), and the easiness of comparing products in several websites (4 responses).

However, Ganesh *et al.* (2007) stated that if customers were not familiar with the benefits of purchasing online, they would prefer to purchase in a physical store. Therefore, according to Su *et al.* (2020), the user interface must be user-centric to be efficient, easy to use, and practical for users. Compare products in several websites and compare different products in the same website was a reason less mentioned, nevertheless Jung and Seock (2017) affirmed that consumers have access to an enormous information to compare their options in the online context.



In research question number five ***“Does the consumer believe that the combination of the two channels can bring a better experience?”***, 13 participants affirmed that to buy a piece of clothing they combine the two channels to improve their experience, which is in line with Blom *et al.* (2017) and Sit *et al.* (2018) that defended the combination of the two channels lead to a positive purchasing behaviour and customer experience, and also maximize shopping efficiency (Kang, 2018; Noble *et al.*, 2005). Interviewee 4 stated, *“The combination enhances the experience, one complements the other”*, which is what Verhoef *et al.* (2015) defended, an omnichannel strategy will lead to an optimized customer experience in all channels. 10 of those 13 participants mentioned they first search online and then go to a physical store to purchase the product (Webrooming). Several studies mentioned in the literature review (Alba *et al.*, 1997; Dholakia *et al.*, 2005; Fernández *et al.*, 2018; Verhoef *et al.*, 2007; Yadav & Pavlou, 2014) affirm that Internet is the preferential channel to search information and the physical store is the preferential channel to purchase. The other 12 participants use only one channel.

In the Buy Online Pick Up In-Store strategy it is necessary to combine the two channels, and that reduces shipping cost for customers (Lin *et al.*, 2020). When asked what influences the place of delivery of the order, when purchasing online, the shipping fees were the most given reason (16 responses), which means, if the person has to pay more or not for the order to be delivered in a specific place. Others reasons given were if they are at home or not (3 responses), the delivery time (1 response) and the delivery schedule (1 response).

Additionally, if there was no cost associated, the majority of participants prefer the order to be delivered at home. Therefore, the Buy Online Puck Up In-Store strategy could be a good solution for participants that do not want to pay shipping fees. 7 participants affirmed that nothing influences their decision about the delivery place of order and they always prefer the home delivery.

The sixth and last research question ***“Will the customer experience be improved by using new technologies?”*** is directly related to new technologies and how they can revolutionize the customer experience in the two channels, particularly in the fashion industry. 18 participants never heard about innovative technology in both channels. Only 7 affirm that have heard about technologies such as 3D, screens to call assistants in the fitting rooms, and virtual mirrors, however they had never tried. Digital fashion technology includes that type of technology and in literature several authors defended that type of technology increases

in-store convenience (Perry, 2016), and facilitate the shopping process (Mosquera *et al.*, 2018). Nevertheless, 22 participants believe that the customer experience will improve with the use of technologies and will facilitate the purchase process, agreeing with the authors that defended technologies make the shopping experience more pleasurable (Alexander & Alvarado, 2017), and facilitate the customer interaction (Alexander & Kent, 2020). They also highlight the fact that it would be very good if there was some technology to see how pieces look like in the specific body, and that will lead to a higher purchase in the online channel. That is what Blazquez (2014) defended, the use of technologies create an integrated experience between channels. Moreover, Kim and Forsythe (2008) affirmed that consumers might be willing to pay more if there was a virtual outfit on a model in the online channel. With that said, it can be concluded that participants feel that using new technologies, the experience would be better and, especially, the online experience would be more similar to offline experience.

Table 4.3 – Trigram analysis. Source: Own elaboration based on Search Engine Optimization Scout, 2021.

Trigram	Number of Words	Uses
<b>Pay shipping fees</b>	3	15
<b>Official brand websites</b>	3	14
<b>Buy physical store</b>	3	9
<b>Online physical store</b>	3	7
<b>Physical store do not</b>	3	7

As it can be observed in table 4.3, the most used set of words in the entire interview was “pay shipping fees” and that is related to the question about what influences the decision about the delivery place of order. The majority of participants affirmed that if they had to pay shipping fees, they preferred to change the location of the delivery place, so they usually choose the delivery places that avoid paying shipping fees. Therefore, using BOPS strategy is a good alternative since reduces shipping costs for customers (Lin *et al.*, 2020). “Official brand websites” is cited several times and is related with the place where participants search information about the product and the online website chosen to purchase the products. Participants choose official brand websites because they feel more secure.

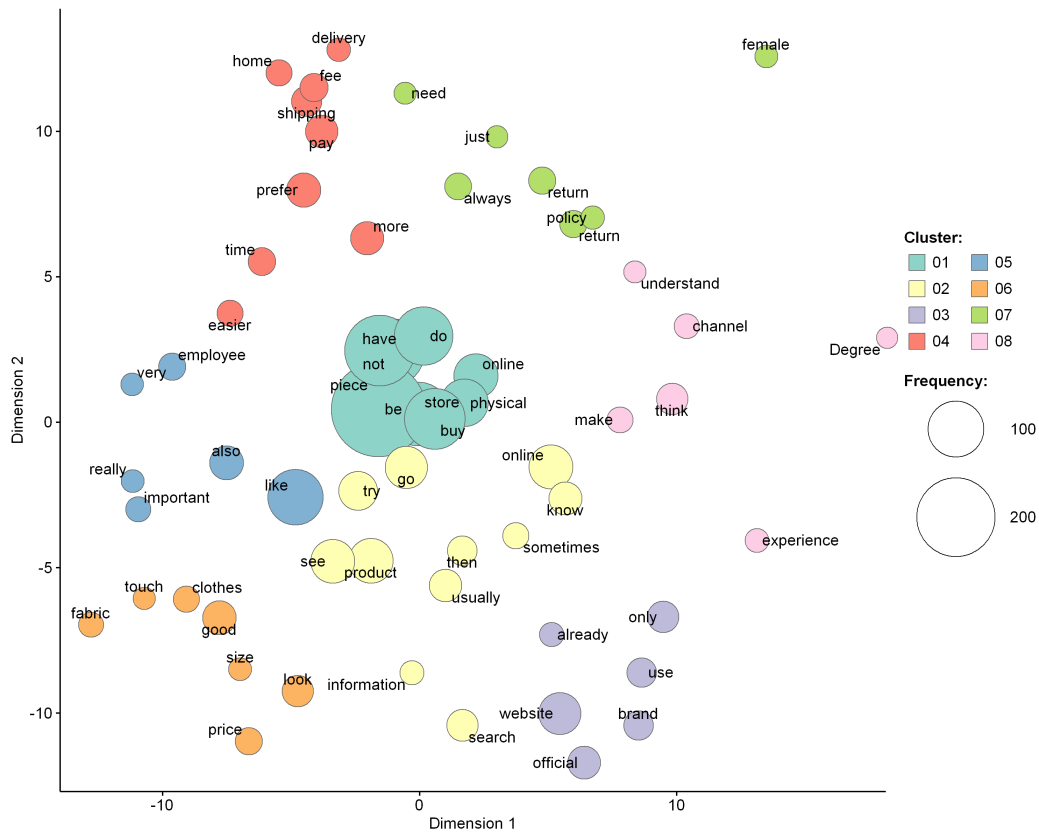


Figure 4.7 – Cluster analysis. Source: own elaboration based on KH Coder, 2021.

Text clustering is a process that divides the text content in different clusters according to their similarity, and it is an important data mining technique (Suyal *et al.*, 2014). In figure 4.7, it is possible to extract relevant information and it can be analysed several questions asked in the interview.

Cluster 2 is related to the question “*When you want to know more about a piece of clothing, where do you search information?*” and, in figure 4.7, it is possible to observe that several participants affirmed that like to try on and see the product, therefore, they prefer to go to the physical store. Nevertheless, there are few that like to search information online.

When analysing cluster 3, it is possible to conclude that the online website where participants buy the most are the official brand websites, and the fact that they only buy on these websites is clear with the word “only”.

The cluster 4 represents the question “*When you make an online purchase, what influences your decision about the delivery place of the order? Why?*” and it is possible to

conclude that is shipping fees, and if there was no shipping fees, participants prefer the order to be delivered at home because it is easier for them.

In cluster 5 there are the “like”, “also”, “employee”, “important”, “really” and “very” words, and it is related to the importance of employees. The majority of participants truly appreciate and ask for employees’ help, however, there are also some that do not like to have any type of interaction.

Moving forward to cluster 6, it is possible to observe the words “good”, “look”, “price”, “clothes”, “fabric”, “touch”, and “size”. All those words are answers to the question “*What do you evaluate to know if that piece is ideal for you?*”. Therefore, participants give a lot of importance to sensory elements when they want to purchase a piece of clothing.

Cluster 7 refers to the question “*After you purchase a clothing piece, there is any post-purchase service that is important for you?*”, and for participants the return policy is a very important post-purchase service.

Figure 4.7 provides an overview of the interview content, however, there are several details that are missed, but mentioned in the previous analysis.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study contributes to the literature on the topic customer experience in the online and offline channel, and more specifically in the fashion industry, from a consumer perspective. It was possible to create a better understanding, confirm some concepts already developed, deepen some of them, and refute others.

In the customer experience, customers give an extreme importance to sensory elements, such as sight and touch. Even if it is unconscious, most participants said that touching, seeing, trying and feeling the items of clothes is essential. That type of stimulation is present in the offline channel, therefore, customers most of the times prefer to purchase in physical stores. Another aspect that makes people decide to purchase offline is the fact that they feel more secure, even with the GDPR. Regarding the interaction with employees, most of participants give that reason for preferring to purchase offline instead of online. Interview participants appreciate the interaction with employees and wanted their help when purchasing a clothing item. However there are also few participants who do not like that type of interaction.

When participants decide to purchase online, it is crucial for them that the website is the official brand website, is intuitive, and that has a lot of information about the product, return policies, and reviews.

Considering the use of new technologies to improve the customer experience, almost all participants never heard about any type of innovative technologies in both channels. Nevertheless, they think it can improve the experience, and in the case of this sector, it would be favourable to have some technology in which it would be possible for customers to see online how they look dressed with a certain piece of clothing. These types of technologies bring the two channels closer and can make them complement each other. In the interview analysis, it was also observed that customers already combine the two channels to improve the experience, and to overcome the disadvantages of each channel. The majority of participants that combine the two channels, first search online, and then purchase in a physical store (concept of Webrooming).

In the development of this research, some limitations occurred. The number of interviews conducted was few, and when analysing the interviews, the KH Coder results were not detailed as expected. Therefore, the analysis of the interview content became more difficult because several important aspects were not translated in the obtained

figures. Another important limitation is the fact that the analysis was only carried out in Portugal, and was focused only on Portuguese consumers.

Future studies can be done in other countries, and, in that case, the conclusions could be generalized. A future research may be the development of deeper studies related to new technologies, namely virtual reality because it is important to be able to articulate the physical dimension with technology. Also, it would be interesting to do an analysis by generations to see the differences between ages when using new technologies.

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## 7. Appendices

### Appendix A - Interview Prototype

Table 7.1- Interview prototype. Source: own elaboration, 2021.

Research Objective	Interview Question (IQ)
Understand where consumers obtain information about a clothing piece, and if it is related to sensory elements.	<p>IQ1. When do you want to know more about a piece of clothing, where do you search information?</p> <p>RQ3. Do consumers have a better experience when have sensory stimulation?</p>
Prove that sensory elements are crucial when purchasing a clothing piece.	<p>IQ2. What do you evaluate to know if that piece of clothing is ideal for you?</p> <p>RQ3. Do consumers have a better experience when receiving sensory stimulation?</p>
Collect information about important characteristics in physical stores.	<p>IQ3. What characteristics do you enjoy the most in a physical store?</p> <p>RQ2. What are the reasons for customers to purchase offline instead of online?</p>
Collect information about important characteristics in online stores.	<p>IQ4. What characteristics do you enjoy the most in an online store?</p> <p>RQ4. What are the reasons for customers to purchase online instead of offline?</p>
Realize if consumers feel safe using the online channel, and if they prefer to use official websites or aggregators.	<p>IQ5. Which online sites do you buy the most?</p> <p>RQ1. Do customers feel safe when purchasing in the online channel, and are there any websites where customers feel safer than others?</p>
Understand if consumers are familiar with the term "Buy Online Pick Up In-Store".	<p>IQ6. When do you make an online purchase, what influences your decision about the delivery place of the order? Why?</p> <p>RQ5. Does the consumer believe that the</p>

	combination of the two channels can bring a better experience?
Analyse the knowledge of consumers regarding new technologies in the sector.	IQ7. Are you aware of any innovative technology in physical clothing store or online? Even if you are never tried it? Do you think that your experience will be better? RQ6. Will the customer experience be improved by using new technologies?
Understand the reason why consumers choose to purchase online.	IQ8. What are the reasons for you to buy online instead of offline? RQ4. What are the reasons for customers to purchase online instead of offline?
Understand the reason why consumers choose to purchase offline.	IQ9. What are the reasons for you to buy offline instead of online? RQ2. What are the reasons for customers to purchase offline instead of online?
Understand if consumers combine the two channels, and how they combine them.	IQ10. For you to buy a piece of clothing, do you combine the two types of channels to improve your experience? RQ5. Consumers believe that combining the two channels can bring a better customer experience?
Understand if there are any concerns related to post-purchase services in each channel (online and offline).	IQ11. After you purchase a clothing piece, there is any post—purchase service that is important for you? RQ2. What are the reasons for customers to purchase offline instead of online?