

Omnichannel Strategy, Click and Collect, And Last Mile Experiences

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Abstract

This chapter examines customer-centered omnichannel management in the retail sector transformed by digitalization. The omnichannel strategy aims to provide customers with a unified and seamless shopping experience by integrating touchpoints such as physical stores, websites, mobile applications, and social media. In this context, the concept of “Seamless Channel Integration” is defined, and the effects of channel integration quality on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and trust are discussed.

Furthermore, the operational reflections of the omnichannel strategy are analyzed through the “Click-and-Collect” (C&C) model and the “Last-Mile Delivery” (LMD) process. C&C serves as a bridge between online and physical channels, improving delivery experiences in terms of speed, cost, and sustainability. Ultimately, the success of omnichannel strategies depends not only on consistency across digital touchpoints but also on operational excellence and logistics integration.

1. Introduction

Technological advances brought about by the digital age have led to a fundamental transformation in customer behaviour, prompting consumers to use multiple channels simultaneously and in an integrated manner during the shopping process. These new expectations are forcing retailers to move beyond traditional single-channel or disjointed multichannel approaches. The omnichannel strategy, which blurs the boundaries between channels and offers customers a seamless and integrated service experience, is at the heart of this transformation. This approach aims to transform the retail world into a ‘wall-less showroom’ where customers can easily switch between channels.

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Seamless channel integration not only increases customer satisfaction, loyalty and trust, but also provides companies with a significant competitive advantage through sales growth and operational efficiency (Arslan & Yildirim, 2016). This section primarily addresses the strategic framework of seamless channel integration, its dimensions and its effects on both customer behaviour and business performance from a theoretical perspective.

It then delves into the ‘Click-and-Collect’ (C&C) model, which stands out as an operational extension and concrete application of this strategic vision. C&C bridges the gap between digital promises and physical service experiences by combining online ordering with physical pick-up processes.

Finally, the section focuses on the ‘Last-Mile Delivery’ (LMD) experience, considered the most costly and complex stage of the e-commerce supply chain. While emphasising the critical role of LMD quality in customer satisfaction, it analyses how alternative delivery models such as C&C offer innovative solutions to the challenges of efficiency, cost, and customer experience in this process. Thus, it presents a holistic view of how the strategic channel integration vision is transformed into customer value through C&C services and last-mile experiences.

2. Omnichannel Strategy and Seamless Channel Integration

The rise of digitalisation and mobile technologies has fundamentally transformed the retail sector and consumer behaviour. Today’s customer no longer expects to be tied to a single channel; instead, they expect to use multiple touchpoints—such as physical stores, websites, mobile apps, and social media—simultaneously and seamlessly throughout their shopping journey. Developed in response to this new expectation, the Omnichannel Strategy is a holistic approach that, unlike traditional approaches that view channels as independent silos, focuses on the customer experience and aims to deliver a consistent, seamless and integrated brand experience across all channels.

The operational foundation of this strategy is Seamless Channel Integration. A successful omnichannel experience is not just about being present across multiple channels, but about these channels working in harmony at the technological, operational and marketing levels. This section will first address the definition and key characteristics of the omnichannel strategy, which has become the cornerstone of modern retail. It will then examine the concept of seamless channel integration, a key element in implementing this strategy, and finally, it will explain in detail the fundamental dimensions that determine the quality of this integration.

Omnichannel Strategy

Omnichannel is a strategic approach that has emerged in retail. This approach aims to provide customers with a unified, consistent and seamless experience across all common channels offered by the retailer (physical stores, online websites, mobile applications, catalogues, call centres, social media, etc.) (Verhoef et al., 2015).

As technology evolves, consumers increasingly demand consistent and integrated experiences across all shopping channels (Baptista, 2025; Mirsch et al., 2016; Shen et al., 2018). These new consumer expectations are driving retailers to develop integrated business models that focus on the customer-brand relationship and aim to deliver personalised experiences (Baptista, 2025; Frasquet & Miquel, 2017).

Traditionally, the single-channel approach relied solely on a single sales channel, such as a physical store, but with the advancement of e-commerce and digitalisation, organisations have begun to operate in both online and physical spaces (multi-channel) (Beck & Rygl, 2015; Mirsch et al., 2016). However, in multichannel retailing, channels are often treated independently (Beck & Rygl, 2015), leading to a lack of operational coordination and the creation of technological ‘walls’ between channel contents (Beck & Rygl, 2015; Frasquet & Miquel, 2017).

This separate approach has been replaced by a new method in which channels can substitute for one another, and touchpoints are integrated (Frasquet & Miquel, 2017). Omnichannel retailing (an evolution of multichannel), by blurring the boundaries between channels, offers both customers and retailers a seamless and integrated service experience (Massi et al., 2023; Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014; Shen et al., 2018; Verhoef et al., 2015).

Basic Definitions and Characteristics of Omnichannel;

Integrated and Seamless Experience: The essence of the omnichannel experience is that customers can move effortlessly from one touchpoint to another throughout their shopping journey without interruption (Massi et al., 2023). This requires a seamless shopping experience (Seamless Omnichannel Interaction Experience - OSIE) where the distinction between channels is virtually eliminated (Chang & Li, 2022). A seamless multichannel experience relies on signal alignment; that is, all channels are aligned to provide a unified customer experience (Massi et al., 2023).

Customer Centricity: Omnichannel is a business model that prioritises the customer-brand relationship over the channels themselves (Lemon &

Verhoef, 2016). The most critical interaction is established not with the channel, but with the brand as a whole (Nguyen, 2017).

Full Integration: Omnichannel retailing is defined as a series of activities involving the sale of goods or services through all existing mainstream channels, where the customer can trigger full channel interaction and/or the retailer controls the integration of all channels (Beck & Rygl, 2015; Mirsch et al., 2016). The aim of omnichannel management is the synergistic management of multiple channels and customer touchpoints to optimise the customer experience and performance across channels (Gao & Huang, 2021).

Seamless Channel Integration

Multi-channel integration (MCI) is defined as the coordinated management of different channels to provide customers with seamless experience across all company channels (Frasquet & Miquel, 2017; Goersch, 2002). This approach transforms the retail world into a 'wall-less showroom,' enabling customers to interact effortlessly with the brand by moving seamlessly and easily between channels (Kind et al., 1999; Massi et al., 2023; Tylväinen & Karjaluoto, 2019).

Seamless channel integration refers to the process of creating a consistent customer experience across various communication and distribution channels. With the advancement of digital technologies and changing consumer behaviours, businesses face the challenge of managing customer interactions across multiple channels.

Therefore, seamless channel integration has become a vital strategy for increasing customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and overall profitability. Seamless channel integration can be defined as harmonising and synchronising customer interactions across different platforms, including online and offline touchpoints.

This integration aims to provide a unified communication structure that eliminates friction in the customer experience, enabling consumers to move effortlessly between channels (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

In the context of multichannel retailing, seamless channel integration strengthens brand consistency and ensures that consumers can easily access the information they need, regardless of which channel they choose. Research indicates that customers who use multiple channels during the shopping process have higher purchase frequency and higher spending levels (Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014).

Dimensions of Channel Integration Quality

The seamless channel integration experience is explained by a construct called Channel Integration Quality (CIQ). CIQ refers to a retailer's ability to provide a seamless and integrated shopping experience across channels (Lee et al., 2019; Shen et al., 2018). The concept of Omnichannel Seamless Interaction Experience (OSIE) (Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2020) is generally examined under three main dimensions:

1. **Consistency:** This refers to the customer receiving the same responses across different channels and information and processes being presented consistently (Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2020; Shen et al., 2018). Consistency encompasses integrated branding (same logo, slogan and colours) and content consistency. Thus, product, price, and promotional information is presented in the same way across all channels (Chen & Chi, 2021; Frasquet & Miquel, 2017; Gao & Huang, 2021).
2. **Freedom of Channel Choice:** Refers to the degree to which customers can freely choose between all channels for different types of interactions, such as shopping, returning items, arranging delivery, or searching for information (Nguyen, 2017; Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2020; Shen et al., 2018; Xin et al., 2022).
3. **Synchronisation (Process Consistency):** This means that customers can complete a process they started on one channel (e.g., online research) on another channel (e.g., in-store purchase) without experiencing any disruption (Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2020; Shen et al., 2018; Xin et al., 2022). This includes processes such as buying online and collecting in-store ('click-and-pick-up') or returning products purchased online to a physical store (Frasquet & Miquel, 2017; Oh, Teo & Sambamurthy, 2012).

More specifically, Channel Integration Quality (CIQ) is also measured through six core routines (Zhang et al., 2018):

1. **Integrated Promotion (IP):** The availability of advertising or promotional information from one channel across other channels.
2. **Integrated Product and Price (IPP):** Access to consistent product and price information across all channels.
3. **Integrated Transaction Information (ITI):** The customer's ability to view and manage their purchase records using the same account across all channels.

4. **Integrated Information Access (IIA):** The customer's ability to access consistent information across channels and to move easily between channels.
5. **Integrated Order Fulfilment (IOF):** The customer's ability to complete the entire purchase process seamlessly using one or more channels.
6. **Integrated Customer Service (ICS):** Providing access to standardised and consistent customer service across all channels, including after-sales services.

These integration efforts require investment at two levels: at the marketing level, for brand image and product coordination; and at the operational and information management level, for the integration of logistics processes and customer databases (Frasquet & Miquel, 2017).

3. Outcomes And Challenges of Channel Integration

The seamless integration of channels is more than just an operational improvement in modern retail; it is a strategic approach that fundamentally transforms both the customer experience and business performance. From the customer's perspective, providing a seamless and consistent experience across channels enhances satisfaction, loyalty, and the emotional connection with the brand. For businesses, this translates into tangible benefits such as increased sales and operational efficiency. This section will explore the multifaceted positive effects of channel integration on customer behaviour and company performance.

However, achieving these strategic goals involves significant challenges. A seamless integration process requires not only investment in technological infrastructure but also deep organisational transformation and overcoming silo mentality. Therefore, to fully realise the potential benefits of channel integration, it is crucial to carefully address these implementation challenges and organisational requirements. In this context, the following subsections will respectively examine the outcomes of integration on customer and business performance, followed by the inherent challenges and requirements of this process.

The Effects of Seamless Channel Integration on Customers

The perceived quality of seamless channel integration (Omnichannel Channel Integration Quality – OCIQ) has a powerful impact on customer experience and satisfaction (Baptista, 2025; Frasquet & Miquel, 2017).

Satisfaction, Continuation Intention, and Loyalty: An integrated experience significantly increases customer satisfaction with their interactions with retailers. Integrated service outputs developed through integration enhance customer satisfaction (Baptista, 2025; Frasquet & Miquel, 2017). According to the traditional expectation-confirmation model (Oliver, 1980), integration affects satisfaction levels based on the comparison between customers' expectations and perceived outcomes (Baptista, 2025). Furthermore, an integrated experience has a positive effect on continuous intention (Baptista, 2025; Kim & Yum, 2024). When channels are integrated, customers are less likely to switch to competing firms (Bhattacharjee et al., 2012). Research shows that multi-channel integration (MCI) has similar and positive effects on both online and offline loyalty. Furthermore, overall satisfaction has been found to play a partial mediating role in MCI's effect on loyalty (Frasquet & Miquel, 2017).

Customer Engagement and Empowerment: Omnichannel integration quality plays a significant role in increasing customer engagement (CE) with the brand or company (Gao & Huang, 2021; Lee et al., 2019). When customers perceive a seamless experience, they feel they expend less effort; this fosters a positive attitude towards the brand and increases the likelihood of using omnichannel services (Shen et al., 2018). In parallel, engagement research on social media reveals that consumers who develop a positive attitude toward the brand and identify with it strongly exhibit participation behaviors such as sharing, commenting, and following (Nart, Kutlu, & Topal, 2019).

Channel integration also supports customer empowerment (Zhang et al., 2018). Consumers regain control over their decision-making processes through integrated channels and gain more freedom and options (Goersch, 2002; Zhang et al., 2018). Consequently, consumer empowerment emerges as a mediating variable in the effect of channel integration (CI) on purchase intention (Zhang et al., 2018).

Trust and WOM: Integrated channels increase customers' trust in the brand (Baptista, 2025; Schramm-Klein et al., 2011). Cross-channel integration strengthens trust in the retailer by reducing information asymmetry and preventing customer confusion through consistent marketing programmes (Schramm-Klein et al., 2011). Seamlessly integrated channels increase customer satisfaction and, consequently, the level of trust (Baptista, 2025; Erciş et al., 2012; Ganesan, 1994; Zhang et al., 2018). Furthermore, it has been observed that a seamless channel experience positively influences word of mouth (WOM) communication (Baptista, 2025; Mazzarol et al., 2007).

The Effects of Seamless Channel Integration on Business Performance

Channel integration has a positive impact not only on improving the customer experience but also on the company's sales growth and operational efficiency (Cao & Li, 2015; Oh et al., 2012).

Sales Growth: Cross-channel integration has a positive effect on company sales growth. Integration enables retailers to direct customers from online channels to physical stores by increasing conversion rates and creating cross-selling opportunities. Companies that coordinate their channels more effectively tend to achieve higher financial performance by increasing customer retention rates (Cao & Li, 2015; Oh et al., 2012).

Operational Benefits: The benefits of integrated retail channels are generally associated with improved customer service, increased trust and loyalty, higher sales, lower operational costs, and increased profitability. Oh et al. (2012) evaluated company performance using criteria such as market share gains, net profit, and revenue growth (Oh et al., 2012). However, these positive effects may be moderated by the resources available to the company. For example, a high level of the company's online experience and physical store presence may reduce the positive effect of cross-channel integration on sales growth. Retailers with extensive physical store networks are likely to benefit less from the increased trust gained through integration (Cao & Li, 2015).

Implementation Challenges and Organisational Requirements

Ensuring seamless channel integration poses significant challenges for retailers and requires profound organisational changes (Mirsch et al., 2016).

Organisational Transformation: To achieve multi-channel integration, businesses must adopt a new organisational model that harmonises people, processes, and technology (Oh et al., 2012).

Overcoming Silo Mentality: One of the key barriers to delivering an integrated experience is that online and traditional channels are still managed as separate silos (Oh et al., 2012; Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014). This structure limits information sharing and process coordination, reducing the effectiveness of integration.

IT Infrastructure and Data Integration: One of the biggest challenges is the integration of information systems, including enterprise resource planning (ERP) and customer relationship management (CRM) systems (Frasquet & Miquel, 2017). Channel integration may require an IT infrastructure specific to the omnichannel structure, beyond simply adding new channels to

existing systems. Therefore, aligning information technology with business strategy and leading the integration process is critical (Mirsch et al., 2016; Oh et al., 2012).

Seamless Channel Integration is a customer-centric necessity for today's retail industry, arising from technological advances and increasing customer expectations (Baptista, 2025; Verhoef et al., 2015). Delivering an integrated experience increases customer satisfaction, loyalty, trust, and word-of-mouth communication (Baptista, 2025; Frasquet & Miquel, 2017), while also providing the company with a competitive advantage through sales growth and operational efficiency (Cao & Li, 2015; Oh et al., 2012). Empirical studies further reveal that social media applications enhance brand awareness and perceived quality, acting as critical drivers of brand equity within omnichannel ecosystems (Gümüş, Zengin, & Geçi, 2013). The ultimate goal for retailers is to create a seamless showroom where customers can move effortlessly across channels and experience a unified brand experience (Tyrväinen & Karjaluoto, 2019). Realising this vision requires comprehensive technological and organisational transformations (Mirsch et al., 2016; Oh et al., 2012; Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014).

Seamless channel integration provides a strategic framework that centralises the customer experience in multichannel retailing. This integrated structure minimises the friction consumers experience when switching between online and offline touchpoints, creating continuity and trust in brand perception. However, this integration must materialise not only at the level of information systems or marketing communications but also in logistics and operational processes. Therefore, the success of omnichannel strategies depends not only on the consistency of interactions on digital platforms but also on ensuring a 'seamless experience' in how products are delivered to customers.

At this point, Click-and-Collect (C&C) services stand out as a concrete application of seamless channel integration. C&C represents the most critical stage in the online-offline transition by combining the online purchase and physical delivery processes for customers. Thanks to channel integration, customers can seamlessly complete the shopping process they started in the digital channel at a physical touchpoint. Thus, C&C acts as a 'bridge' that fills the gap between the brand's digital promises and the physical service experience.

The importance of this model is not limited to customer experience; it also plays a decisive role in restructuring last-mile delivery processes in terms of cost, speed and sustainability. In traditional delivery systems, the highest

cost and operational difficulty usually arise in this ‘last mile’ stage, where the product reaches the end user. The Click-and-Collect model shortens delivery times and reduces logistics costs by enabling active customer participation in this process.

In this context, Click-and-Collect and Last-Mile Experiences, discussed in the next section, can be considered the operational extension of seamless channel integration. This section details the tangible aspects of omnichannel strategies that touch the customer – particularly delivery satisfaction, logistics optimisation, and sustainability impacts. Thus, the strategic vision of channel integration is transformed into customer value at the application level through C&C services and last-mile experiences.

4. Operational Applications of The Omnichannel Strategy: Click-And-Collect and Last-Mile Experiences

Bringing the vision of seamless channel integration to life requires concrete operational applications that engage directly with the customer, going beyond strategic planning. At this point, Click-and-Collect services stand out as one of the most critical applications bridging the gap between digital and physical retail. This model, which enables customers to seamlessly complete an online purchase journey with a physical collection experience, turns the omnichannel promise into reality. Click-and-Collect is more than just a delivery alternative; it is a fundamental element that reshapes the ‘last-mile’ experience, the most costly and complex stage of e-commerce logistics.

This section delves into the operational dimensions of omnichannel strategies, focusing on Click-and-Collect and last-mile delivery experiences. First, different Click-and-Collect models and their operations will be examined, followed by an analysis of the key motivations and service expectations driving consumers to adopt this service. Subsequently, critical issues such as operational challenges affecting the quality of these services, sustainability dimensions, and profitability optimisation will be discussed. Finally, the role of Click-and-Collect within the overall last-mile delivery experience and the key factors influencing customer satisfaction will be identified, presenting the fundamental dynamics of a successful omnichannel operation from a holistic perspective.

Click-and-Collect

Click and Collect (C&C) or Buy-Online-Pickup-In-Store (BOPIS), is one of the fundamental omnichannel strategies developed by the retail sector (Erkkilä, 2021; Yaman, 2024). This service, which allows consumers to place orders online and collect products from a physical store or designated

collection point, has rapidly gained popularity by offering customers flexibility and reducing last-mile delivery costs. The growth of the C&C market accelerated significantly, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020) (Mevel et al., 2021).

Today, customers expect to be able to start the shopping process on one channel and complete it on another. In this context, the C&C service has become a critical distribution method, combining online ordering and physical collection, thereby reducing the customer's need to visit the store and lowering traditional delivery costs (Meléndrez-Acosta, 2018). In the UK and many other European countries, C&C has rapidly evolved into a growing hybrid retail format (Nguyen, 2017).

C&C is a logistics application model where customers purchase products online and collect them from the retailer's store or a designated collection point (Erkkilä, 2021; Meléndrez-Acosta, 2018). C&C applications vary depending on the retailer's strategy. Common models include:

- **In-store Fulfillment/Picking:** Store employees pick orders and deliver products within the store. This model is relatively easy to implement (Erkkilä, 2021). For example, at BAUHAUS, customer orders are limited to the store's current stock and are typically prepared within 4 hours. At DeFacto, products ordered with the 'Pick Up in Store' option are separated from the store's stock and the customer is notified by SMS. Decathlon Turkey also offers same-day delivery with its 'Pick Up in Store (C&C)' option.
- **Near-store Fulfillment/Drive-in:** The order fulfilment centre is located right next to the store. Customers drive up to this location (curbside pickup) and collect their orders. This model is particularly well known in France under the name 'Drive' (Gielens et al., 2021; Mevel et al., 2021).
- **Stand-alone Fulfillment/Drive-out:** In this model, orders are delivered from warehouses independent of stores (Gielens et al., 2021).
- **Additionally, some retailers create pick-up points (service points) using unstaffed automated delivery lockers or existing shops.** These points are often referred to as Click and Delivery Points (CDP) (Milioti et al., 2020). Another logistically significant difference arises in payment models.
- **Reserve Click & Collect (Reserve C&C):** Allows the customer to make an online reservation and pay in-store.

- Pre-paid Click & Collect (Pre-paid C&C): Requires the customer to purchase the products online, complete the payment, and then collect them from a physical location. The Pre-paid C&C model increases operational efficiency by reducing the costs of holding unpaid inventory, minimises waiting times, and has the potential to increase profitability by raising collection rates (Yaman, 2024).

Consumer Motivations and Service Expectations

The primary motivations behind the adoption of Click and Collect (C&C) services include consistency in delivery times, convenience, and time savings (Vyt et al., 2022). Customers expect C&C services to operate quickly, easily, and without errors (Erkkilä, 2021). According to research by Jara et al. (2018), one of the key elements contributing to the customer's perceived value is the collection point itself, and timely service delivery is of central importance at this point.

The C&C service offers customers personalised offers as well as flexibility in the purchasing process. Customers have the option to pay for products upon collection or cancel the transaction (Meléndrez-Acosta, 2018). Victor et al.'s (2018) research on urban online consumers showed that online trust and perceived convenience have significant and positive effects on the adoption of C&C. Since C&C allows for the physical collection of products, perceived risk factors common in online shopping, such as product risk and financial risk, were found not to significantly influence the adoption decision (Victor et al., 2018).

Furthermore, when examining delivery method preferences in online shopping, C&C selection was found to be associated with higher hedonistic orientations. This implies that customers derive experiential pleasure from the process of visiting the store to collect products ordered online (Miquel-Romero et al., 2018).

Service Quality, Operational Challenges and Development

As a result of increasing demand, retailers must continually review their Click and Collect (C&C) service designs (Erkkilä, 2021; Vercruyse, 2021). The fundamental dimensions of service quality—reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles—have a decisive impact on customers' emotions and purchasing decisions. In particular, responsiveness and assurance have been shown to have a meaningful and positive effect on customer emotions. Therefore, it is crucial to effectively train staff working in multi-channel services (Hung Le et al., 2019).

However, it has been found that the C&C system is logistically costly and creates various difficulties in internal processes. In C&C orders, the responsibility for order picking passes to the retailer, whereas in in-store shopping, this task is performed by customers (Pazour & Furmans, 2023). Therefore, retailers need to identify internal process issues (pain points) that could negatively affect the customer experience.

Research conducted at BAUHAUS Finland stores revealed various inefficiencies, particularly in the stages of order picking, storage of picked products, and the customer order delivery process (Erkkilä, 2021). To improve service quality, service design tools such as service blueprints can be used, especially when internal processes need improvement. For example, the proposed new plan for BAUHAUS Espoo, which includes a new C&C area and a dedicated service counter, has the potential to reduce the time spent storing collected orders from 2–12 minutes to 1–2 minutes and customer waiting time from 4–46 minutes to 2–14 minutes (Erkkilä, 2021; Mevel et al., 2021).

The C&C model can also offer significant benefits in terms of sustainability. This method has the potential to reduce transport distances and CO₂ emissions (Schnieder et al., 2023). According to research by Milioti et al. (2020), customers who believe in the environmental contribution of C&C are 3.485 times more likely to use this service and are more willing to pay extra for it (Milioti et al., 2020). However, the sustainability of C&C varies depending on the type of transport used by the customer to reach the collection point and the distance travelled (Schnieder et al., 2023).

Profitability and Optimisation

One of the fundamental ways to optimise Click and Collect (C&C) profitability is to utilise in-store stock to reduce transport costs and shorten delivery times. While utilising in-store stock provides a cost advantage, it may also create the risk of lost sales before the replenishment process takes place. Therefore, optimisation models aim to maximise overall profitability by balancing stock utilisation, the risk of lost sales, and transport costs. However, this optimisation process is quite complex, equivalent to an NP-complete problem, and requires the integration of information systems such as the Stock Management System (SMS) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) (Grigoras et al., 2019).

The C&C model creates additional revenue opportunities by increasing the retailer's interaction with the customer. When customers visit the store to collect their order, they tend to make additional in-store purchases, which

increases the potential for cross-selling (Meléndrez-Acosta, 2018). Similarly, retailers can develop strategies to promote related products or suggest higher-value products (up-selling) through the online channel.

According to the cost model developed by Spalla (2014), implementing a C&C system incurs both capital expenditure (CAPEX) and operating expenditure (OPEX) costs. Personnel expenses (order pickers and delivery personnel) constitute the largest portion of operating costs, while investment costs consist largely of the renewal or adaptation of IT systems (inventory and order management software) and the physical layout of collection points.

Spalla's (2014) analysis revealed that new customers are the primary source of revenue that makes a fundamental difference in C&C profitability. This is because when existing customers switch to the C&C system, their average receipt values increase, but their purchase frequency tends to decrease. The same study concluded that, in an optimistic scenario, the investment could be recouped in approximately 1 year and 4 months (Spalla, 2014).

Click and Collect and Last Mile Delivery Experiences

Click and Collect (C&C) is a critical omnichannel service that transforms the customer experience by providing flexibility, speed, and cost advantages in the retail sector (Meléndrez-Acosta, 2018; Vyt et al., 2022). However, this service also brings challenges for retailers, such as order fulfilment responsibilities (Pazour & Furmans, 2023), high operational costs (especially personnel expenses), and IT infrastructure investments (Spalla, 2014). A successful C&C strategy requires a focus on service design (Erkkilä, 2021; Gibbons, 2017), the elimination of internal process bottlenecks, and the optimisation of logistics costs through the efficient use of in-store inventory (Grigoras et al., 2019). Strategic decisions, such as transitioning from Reserve C&C to Pre-paid C&C, have the potential to increase both operational efficiency and customer satisfaction (Yaman, 2024). For retailers, C&C is not only a service model but also a strategic tool for attracting new customers (Spalla, 2014) and gaining a competitive advantage by appealing to environmentally conscious consumers (Milioti et al., 2020). The continuous improvement and optimisation of this service is vital for ensuring sustainable profitability in the retail sector.

The rise of the e-commerce industry has profoundly transformed the global economy and provided customers with unprecedented access to goods and services (Aljohani, 2024). This growth has significantly increased demand for Last-Mile Delivery (LMD) services, which represent the final stage of logistics networks (Aljohani, 2024). The last mile refers to

the critical delivery stage between a local distribution depot and the end consumer (Bates et al., 2018). LMD is seen as both a complex and vital component of the e-commerce supply chain (Islam et al., 2024). This stage is often defined as the most costly, inefficient, and challenging part of the logistics process (Aljohani, 2024; Islam et al., 2024). Indeed, LMD costs can account for more than 40% of total supply chain costs (Slabinac, 2015).

The primary purpose of LMD services is to optimise profit margins on the one hand and increase customer satisfaction through fast delivery on the other (Aljohani, 2024). In this context, the LMD experience plays a mediating role between the overall online retail experience and customer satisfaction (Aljohani, 2024; Vakulenko et al., 2019). The quality of LMD services includes factors such as delivery speed, tracking options, and various delivery points, and directly influences customers' online shopping tendencies (Aljohani, 2024). It is widely accepted that logistics and supply chain performance directly affect the customer experience (Olsson et al., 2023).

Customer experience is a multidimensional construct of the cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensory, physical, and social responses a customer gives throughout their purchasing journey in response to a service offering (Olsson et al., 2023; Vrhovac et al., 2023). Empirical research has revealed that the LMD experience can be evaluated across six key dimensions: Delivery Efficiency, Package Tracking, Seamless Delivery Experience, Visual Appeal, Pleasant Anticipation, and Convenience (Vrhovac et al., 2023).

When examining the perceptions of online shoppers, a strong preference for timely delivery emerges. Consumers particularly prefer deliveries made within one day of purchase (Aljohani, 2024), while expressing dissatisfaction with scheduled deliveries at very early hours (e.g., between 06:00–09:00). To increase customer satisfaction, it is critical for LMD service providers to focus on delivery speed (accuracy and efficiency), real-time tracking, and flexible time slot options (Vrhovac et al., 2023). Delivery drivers are brand ambassadors who interact directly with customers. Driver–customer interactions significantly influence the customer's overall delivery experience and future purchasing behaviour. Negative driver behaviour (e.g., inappropriate attitude or lack of flexibility) triggers negative emotions such as anger or sadness in customers, reducing satisfaction and repurchase intent (Masorgo et al., 2023). When customers experience a poor delivery experience, their likelihood of repurchasing is quite low. Moreover, many customers tend to switch to an alternative retailer without directly reporting their dissatisfaction (Aljohani, 2024).

Research shows that the Click and Collect (C&C) service is considered by customers as a factor that increases delivery satisfaction. Customers perceive picking up packages from smart parcel lockers in public areas or from store information desks as a high-quality delivery experience (Aljohani, 2024). Such alternative delivery models offer promising solutions that respond to customers' growing demand for efficient and sustainable delivery. Parcel lockers provide customers with flexible time windows by enabling a transition from manual services to unattended delivery systems; this can lead to significant reductions in shipping costs compared to traditional delivery methods (Seghezzi et al., 2022).

Key Factors Influencing the Adoption of Click and Collect and Consumer Satisfaction

The key factors influencing the adoption of Click and Collect and consumer satisfaction are as follows:

1. **Reliability and Security:** Reliability, security, and timeliness are critical factors for consumers (Tsai et al., 2021). Parcel lockers may be perceived as more reliable than home delivery because they reduce the risk of delivery delays and prevent failed deliveries when no one is home (Zhu et al., 2023). Security and privacy are also frequently cited factors influencing the use of smart lockers (Tsai et al., 2021).
2. **Convenience and Accessibility:** Convenience is one of the factors that most influences customer satisfaction with Click-and-Collect (Goersch, 2002). The accessibility of the Click-and-Collect point and its timely service provision significantly influence consumer choices (Cebeci et al., 2023; Milioti et al., 2020). The use of smart parcel lockers is also largely dependent on network structure and accessibility (Zhu et al., 2023).
3. **Cost Effectiveness:** Consumer preferences are shaped by the cost of logistics services (Aljohani, 2024). Cost effectiveness has been identified as one of the most important factors influencing customer experience through smart parcel lockers (Tsai et al., 2021).

Consumers tend to request convenient time slots for delivery when shopping online; this indicates that LMD providers need to improve their scheduling capabilities (Aljohani, 2024). A study conducted in Malaysia revealed that time slot delivery and unattended delivery options significantly impact the experiences and repurchase intentions of online shoppers (Rajendran & Wahab, 2022). Last-mile experiences play a central role in e-commerce success and customer loyalty (Aljohani, 2024; Vrhovac et al.,

2023). Timeliness, accuracy, tracking capability, and professional driver behaviour in delivery processes have direct effects on overall customer experience and satisfaction (Aljohani, 2024; Masorgo et al., 2023; Vrhovac et al., 2023).

Alternative delivery solutions such as Click-and-Collect offer significant potential for overcoming the cost and efficiency challenges of LMD (Aljohani, 2024; Tsai et al., 2021). Consumers prefer these methods, particularly due to the convenience, security, and cost-effectiveness they offer (Cebeci et al., 2023; Tsai et al., 2021). Logistics providers and retailers should focus on maximising customer satisfaction by improving service efficiency in traditional delivery models (through factors such as Delivery Efficiency and Package Tracking) (Vrhovac et al., 2023) and on developing the reliability and convenience factors that enable the adoption of alternative methods (Tsai et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2023).

5. Conclusion

The digital transformation of the retail sector has driven businesses to develop customer-centric and technology-integrated strategies. Seamless channel integration, examined throughout this section, has evolved from being merely a competitive advantage to becoming a necessity in today's market conditions. A consistent and integrated shopping experience, where customers can seamlessly switch between different channels, forms the basis for increasing brand loyalty, trust and satisfaction. The success of this strategy requires not only marketing and communication integration, but also the full integration of operational and logistical processes.

One of the most concrete and effective applications of this integration vision, Click-and-Collect, acts as a critical bridge between the online and offline worlds. C&C offers customers flexibility, speed and cost advantages, while also providing retailers with the opportunity to overcome the high costs and complexity associated with last-mile delivery (LMD). A successful C&C model requires the meticulous design of order picking, stock management and delivery processes, and directly impacts both operational efficiency and customer experience.

Last mile delivery is the most critical stage where e-commerce meets the customer and plays a decisive role in overall satisfaction. Factors such as delivery speed, tracking capabilities and driver behaviour directly shape customer perception. Alternative delivery methods, such as C&C and smart parcel lockers, offer innovative solutions to LMD's efficiency challenges,

responding to customers' growing demands for convenience, security, and flexibility.

Ultimately, retailers' sustainable success depends on moving away from siloed channel structures and establishing an integrated omnichannel ecosystem. When the strategically designed vision of seamless channel integration is translated into tangible customer value through C&C and last-mile experiences supported by operational excellence, it delivers lasting gains in both customer loyalty and business profitability. Although implementing this vision necessitates comprehensive technological and organisational transformations, it offers the key to survival and growth in the future of retail.

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