

Omnichannel Retail Strategies: Analysing Consumer Purchase Intentions for Perishable Products in Klang Valley, Malaysia

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DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v15-i11/25322>

Published Date: 05 November 2025

Abstract

Purpose – This study seeks to understand the factors that drive customers in choosing their preferred retail format for purchasing perishable products, which will help retailers optimize their retail channels. The purpose of this research is to identify the aspects influencing customers' preferences among the three major retail channels for purchasing perishable products: supermarkets, wet markets, and online platforms and to assess the significance of omnichannel retailing for perishable goods. **Design/methodology/approach** – The study will employ qualitative method, thematic analysis to examine the four independent variables— Product Quality, Service Quality, Need for Touch, and Variety-Seeking Behavior—and their effect on consumer purchase intention. Three types of retail formats are examined, each representing a different era of retail evolution: wet markets (traditional retail), supermarkets (modern retail), and online platforms (digital retail), as mediating factors influencing purchase intention for perishable products. **Findings** – The result shows that a new EIC model was developed to measure the purchase intention which consist of extrinsic value (E), intrinsic value (I) and shopping convenient (C) for perishable goods in Klang Valley. **Research limitations/implications** – Respondents lacked a thorough understanding of the word and incorrectly associated 'omnichannel' retail with online retail format. Despite this, the study's findings provide useful insights for managerial decision-making in distribution, marketing, and operational strategies for retailers or vendors of perishable goods, when examining omnichannel retail for perishable product distribution. **Practical implications** – Given the nature of the perishability of the products, this research could be used to further understand how customer evaluating their purchasing experience for retailers to improve their services rendered. **Originality/value** – The study primarily contributes to identifying the characteristics that influence customer preferences among the three primary retail channels for acquiring perishable products—supermarkets, wet markets, and online platforms—as well as evaluating the significance of omnichannel shopping in this context.

Keywords: Purchase Intention, Perishable Products, Omnichannel Retail

Introduction

The retail industry has made a major contribution to Malaysia's GDP, with a market size of USD 89.66 billion in 2024 and a 5.94% CAGR (Mordor Intelligence, 2024). The top five brick-and-mortar retailers in Malaysia are B.I.G Store Sdn. Bhd., 7-Eleven, MJ Departmental Stores Sdn. Bhd., Lotus, and AEON CO (M) Sdn. Bhd. Despite this, Malaysia's retail market is highly fragmented, with no major companies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, physical retail sales fell by 30.9% compared to the same period in 2019 (Mordor Intelligence, 2024). Yet, the online distribution channel has gained significant traction in Malaysia, adding 362,000 new digital consumers between 2022 and 2023. According to surveys, 61.3% of Malaysian internet users make at least one online purchase per week (Commission Factory, 2023). The epidemic has resulted in a long-term shift toward digital uptake and consumption in Malaysia. During the peak of lockdowns in 2021, 75% of Malaysians explored eCommerce platforms, with 45% making a purchase. By 2022, these figures remained relatively steady at 72% and 46%, respectively (Seah et al., 2022). Despite the digital shift, a 2023 poll found that Malaysian customers still prefer to purchase at physical stores, especially for perishables, groceries, and furnishings (Seah et al., 2022). Supermarkets had the greatest market share of consumer goods sales channels in the country, accounting for more than 40% by 2023 (Seah et al., 2022). The selling of perishable foods has become increasingly crucial for grocery merchants, particularly as global awareness of the need to dramatically reduce food waste over the next decade grows (Van Donselaar et al., 2016). Perishable products are a critical category of consumer goods, distinguished by a fixed or restricted shelf life after which they are no longer appropriate for consumption. This category contains fruits, vegetables, fish, other seafood, and cattle goods including chicken and meat. Retailers offering perishable goods face the challenge of balancing the right product quantities to meet customer demand, which is often unpredictable in nature (Ntobaki et al., 2022).

Malaysia's perishable product distribution channels are bifurcated into two primary categories. Traditional markets, which include wet markets, fresh markets, night markets, and farmer's markets, remain a favoured choice among consumers (Trappey & Lai, 1997). In contrast, modern markets are distinguished by organized, licensed retailers who manage expansive chains of supermarkets and hypermarkets, providing a more streamlined and contemporary shopping experience (Shaari & Tan, 2018). Since the pandemic, the global retail landscape, including in Malaysia, has undergone significant changes. The retail sector has experienced an unprecedented digital transformation, leading to the rise of a new retail format: online retail through e-commerce platforms. This shift has accelerated the co-existence of physical and digital retail channels (Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020a).

Today, the capacity to fluidly engage numerous consumer-store interaction channels, such as using mobile internet within a physical retail store to access product information or compare pricing, is the defining feature of the 'omnichannel' retail phenomena. This approach is based on the well-established multichannel retail architecture, which has expanded considerably since the commercialization of the World Wide Web (www). The term 'omni' comes from Latin, which means '*all*' or '*universal*' (Lazaris & Vrechopoulos, 2014). According to a retail report, Malaysian consumers place high importance on the ability to effortlessly transition between in-store and online shopping. The report reveals that 66% of survey respondents express greater loyalty to retailers that provide the flexibility to begin purchases in-store and complete them online (Mordor Intelligence, 2024).

Omnichannel retail continues to grow rapidly worldwide, emerging as a leading frontier in retail diversification. However, it remains less preferred for purchasing perishable goods due to consumers' inherent need for tactile engagement. This preference for physical inspection stems from a personality trait that drives reliance on haptic information to assess the quality of items and reduce uncertainty during the decision-making process (Kühn et al., 2020). Consumers frequently demand timely delivery, rigorous quality control, and transparent communication about the freshness and shelf life of perishable products. Meeting these expectations across various channels introduces significant logistical challenges for retailers, including inventory synchronization, temperature management during transportation, and last-mile delivery issues (Zuo & Gou, 2023). Failure to address these challenges can result in poor customer experiences, damage to brand reputation, and lost revenue opportunities (Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020b). This research study aims to identify the features that influence customer preferences among the three primary retail channels for purchasing perishable products: supermarkets, wet markets, and online platforms, as well as to assess the importance of omnichannel retailing in this context.

Literature Review

The evolution of modern retail channels in Malaysia began in the 1960s with the opening of The Weld Supermarket in Kuala Lumpur in 1963 (Mohd Roslin & Melewar, 2008). The modernization of the retail industry has introduced new formats such as supermarkets, hypermarkets, and convenience stores, which provide 'one-stop shopping' destinations with a broad range of merchandise categories, including perishable goods. The Covid-19 pandemic had changed the retail landscape where people start to adapt and rely on the convenience of internet to shop via e-commerce platforms where the internet or web-browser became the primary tool for e-shopping (Kumaran Kanapathipillai & Kumaran, 2022). The concept of omnichannel retailing demands that retailers to operate in a seamless and synergistic manner across all formats, as customers expect consistent, positive experiences and accurate information to foster their loyalty (Kent et al., 2015). Previous study has looked into pre-adoption criteria for omnichannel shoppers, focusing on instrumental beliefs such perceived usefulness and simplicity of use as significant drivers of technology acceptance and usage intention (Lu et al., 2005);(Neslin et al., 2014); (Verhoef et al., 2007).

Product Quality (PQ)

Research on purchasing behavior and product quality for perishable goods reveals that when customers deliberately choose fresher products or perceive uniform quality across all items, the impact on profit losses is notably reduced (Amorim et al., 2014). Furthermore, a study of 384 passenger car users found that improvements in product quality significantly enhance customer satisfaction and purchase intention (Hanaysha & Abdghani, 2016). Freshness is frequently viewed as an indicator of a retailer's quality standards and reliability. A text mining analysis of 5,958 online reviews from Tmall Fresh Channel revealed that consumers primarily focus on product quality, service quality, and perceived quality when assessing the value of perishable goods (Zuo & Gou, 2023). In ensuring the freshness of perishable goods, the quality of logistics services is crucial in aligning the product quality displayed on the application page with the actual quality experienced by customers (Monoarfa et al., 2024).

Service Quality (SQ)

Service quality is an intrinsically abstract and elusive notion due to the specific properties of services such as intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability, which make it difficult to effectively assess (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Furthermore, consumer participation in the service delivery process introduces a dynamic factor, wherein one group of customers can significantly influence the service quality perceptions of others (Ghobadian et al., 1994). As service variability fluctuates over time, managing quality becomes increasingly challenging due to evolving consumer expectations (Polyakova & Mirza, 2015). In the context of perishable product services, perishability implies that services cannot be stored, resold, or returned. However, (Edvardsson et al., 2005) argue that perishability is a characteristic driven exclusively by the provider's actions, rather than the consumers. They suggest the implementation of 'tangibilizers,' such as creating positive customer experiences, to mitigate the challenges associated with perishability. In the context of service, the SERVQUAL model is commonly employed, encompassing key dimensions such as speed, usability, reliability, responsiveness, and privacy (Rafiq et al., 2012).

Need For Touch (NFT)

Many consumers derive psychological satisfaction from physically interacting with products prior to purchase, as it provides reassurance, particularly for items where freshness and quality are critical to the consumption experience. Additionally, in numerous cultures, the physical inspection of perishable goods is a long-standing tradition, deeply embedded in the shopping process. The need for touch (NFT) significantly influences economic factors, such as willingness to pay. Studies on perceived product quality tend to show a negative bias toward online purchases (San-Martín et al., 2017), as consumers' cognitive and affective responses are shaped by their NFT tendencies (Kühn et al., 2020).

Variety Seeking Behaviour (VSB)

Variety-seeking behavior (VSB) refers to the inclination to explore and be exposed to a diverse range of merchandise, enabling consumers to assess the quality, quantity, and availability of potential products (Mallapragada et al., 2016). This behavior has predominantly been studied in relation to the product-centric mindsets that consumers adopt while shopping. Research has identified several antecedents to VSB, which fall into two broad categories. The first includes external factors typically shaped by marketing strategies, such as new product introductions, discounts, and promotions (Trijp et al., 1996). The second category pertains to internal, psychological drivers related to the consumer's innate desire for variety (Michaelidou, 2012). Both categories are based on the premise that a consumer's buying behavior is influenced by the type of value they seek, whether hedonic or utilitarian, as expressed by their product choices at the end of the shopping process (Wu & Kao, 2011); (Murray et al., 2022).

Retail Format: Omnichannel Platform

The importance of these buying orientations as antecedents is growing for discerning shoppers. A study of 630 young-adult consumers from an emerging market found that novelty- and convenience-seeking shoppers are more likely to use e-commerce, whereas quality-conscious and indecisive consumers with habitual shopping habits have lower online purchase intentions (Meppurath & Varghese, 2022). Retailers of perishable goods are encountering heightened demand for home deliveries, while grappling with challenges

related to inventory management, supply chain logistics, timely delivery, and maintaining a safe environment in their facilities (Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020). This has led to the development of various e-commerce platforms by independent retailers, including the omnichannel approach. In this model, retailers with physical stores establish online platforms to engage with customers virtually, effectively combining both offline and online retail experiences (brick-and-click). A study of 400 Thai Millennials (aged 22–40 years) demonstrated that integrated information access significantly impacts customers' perception of risk reduction and influences their purchasing behavior (Juaneda-Ayensa et al., 2016). (Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014) argue that despite evolving trends, achieving effective channel integration remains a formidable challenge for retailers. This is largely due to a lack of comprehensive information regarding digital marketing channels and an understanding of customer perspectives across various distribution channels.

While considerable research has been conducted on understanding consumer behavior regarding omnichannel usage and purchase intentions, the focus has predominantly been on durable goods, such as fashion products (Kent et al., 2015); (Lynch & Barnes, 2020). Omnichannel shopping intentions for perishable goods, including dry grocery items, have received comparatively less attention (Muchardie et al., 2016). The objective of this research is to explore the interrelationships between perceived product quality, perceived service quality, the need for touch, variety-seeking behavior, omnichannel engagement, with consumer purchase intention.

One widely recognized model that elucidates consumer purchase intention is the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework from environmental psychology (Russell & Mehrabian, 1977). According to this concept, environmental stimuli (S) induce internal cognitive and emotional states in consumers (O), shaping their behavioural reactions (R). In this study, product quality, service quality, the need for touch, and variety-seeking behavior are the environmental stimuli (S) that influence consumers' shopping channel decisions (O), which eventually lead to their purchase intention (R). The conceptual framework is derived from a thorough literature review and is anchored in the fundamentals of SOR theory as illustrated in Figure 1.

Conceptual Framework



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework based on SOR theory

Propositions

1. Product quality, service quality, need for touch, and variety-seeking behavior are key determinants influencing the purchase of perishable products.
2. Product quality, service quality, need for touch, and variety-seeking behavior are critical determinants in omnichannel retail purchases of perishable products.
3. To assess the significance of omnichannel retail in influencing consumers' purchase intentions for perishable products.

Research Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology to obtain profound insights into the subject matter. This approach was chosen for its ability to elicit comprehensive descriptions of consumer experiences, preferences, and decision-making processes. Additionally, it captures the consumer's voice directly, offering valuable insights into their personal experiences and subjective evaluations, which can guide the development of more customized marketing strategies.

Data Collection

A survey questionnaire was administered to five (5) retail customers with prior experience in omnichannel retail purchasing. Participants were presented with open-ended questions (with reference to Table 1) and invited to elaborate on their perceptions and intentions regarding omnichannel shopping. The interviews lasted between 60 and 65 min. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio recorded. The transcripts were analysed using content analysis to derive insights from their responses.

Questionnaire Design

Table 1

Survey Questions on Consumer Purchase Intentions

Demographic Information	
A1	Please state your name, age, gender, occupation, marital status and household size.
A2	Between wet market, supermarket and online platform, please choose your most preferred retail format to purchase perishable product.
Variables	Questions
PQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you believe the product quality at your preferred retail format best meets your needs?
QS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you perceive the service quality standards provided by the vendors at your preferred retail format?
NFT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it essential for you to touch a perishable product to assess its quality before purchasing? Why? • How do you feel about evaluating a perishable product for purchase based solely on its image in a catalogue or on a mobile device?

VSB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it important for you to browse through various retail locations (both online and offline) to explore product, price, and promotion options before purchasing a perishable product? Why?
Omnichannel Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why do you prefer shopping for perishable products using a specific retail format?
Purchase Intention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you tend to seek information online and make actual purchases offline, or vice versa, when buying perishable products? Why or why not?

Results and Discussions

The analysis was conducted in three phases to elucidate the themes and concepts pertinent to omnichannel purchase intentions for perishable goods. Initially, the audio recordings of each respondent were reviewed and transcribed verbatim, as detailed in Table 2, to identify and extract recurrent concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Subsequently, these concepts, reflecting common ideas, were categorized into themes that potentially influence consumer behavior in omnichannel shopping for perishable products.

Demographic of the Respondents

The samples comprised of 3 females and 2 males, aged between 28 and 54 years old, with household sizes varying from 2 to 6 members. The preferred retail formats among the participants were supermarkets and wet markets, with a notably lower preference for online shopping. This diminished interest in online purchasing was attributed to concerns that online retailers or delivery personnel may not exercise the same level of selectiveness or attentiveness when selecting products on the customer's behalf.

Findings

Table 2 displays the verbatim transcripts of the interviews with the respondents and the subsequent categorization of the principal ideas derived from the interview outcomes. A total of 4 major themes were identified from the interview sessions. The statements were categorized into the following: Vendor Competency, Service Expectation, Assurance, Satisfaction, Convenience and Behavioural Influence.

Table 2
Thematic Analysis

Factors	Excerpts from interviews	Meaning units	Category	Themes
PQ	<i>"Not as good as at other supermarkets such as AEON or Jaya Grocer, but suitable with the price they offer."</i>	Value for money	Vendor Competency	
	<i>"Well refrigerated product display and packaging – quality assured."</i>	Good display way via refrigeration system		
	<i>"Shorter business hour with many customers – products are supplied daily to vendors."</i>	High turnover products		
	<i>"Well known and reputable retailer with sufficient feedback channel at their e-commerce platform."</i>	Vendor reputation		
	<i>"Acceptable product quality, fresh products supplied by local suppliers."</i>	Fresh products from local suppliers.		
SQ	<i>"Acceptable service, as long as they provide cutting service for fish and chicken is good for me." And important service is car parking is convenient not like if I shop at wet market.</i>	Cutting service, convenient parking,	Service Expectation	Extrinsic Value
	<i>"Good clean ambient, sufficient information on price, expiry and product origin. What important for me is they use digital weighing scale, so the price charged for me is very transparent."</i>	Cleanliness, transparent information and pricing.		
	<i>"I admit that service quality in terms of cleanliness at wet market is out if compared with supermarket." "Many vendors are still using the old weighing scale, thus price charged may not be accurate."</i>	Poor cleanliness, inaccurate weighing.		
	<i>"The most important service for me is the delivery as I don't like to go to wet market and no time to go shopping as well. And I am not well verse with some of the product name, so I am depending to the product labelling on the website to search for products requested by the recipe I'm trying." "However, there is no cutting service for fish and chicken, sometimes the vegetables I purchased were not at its best condition, may be due to the staff who was on duty to prepare my order was just wants to complete his/her task without scrutinising the product quality."</i>	Delivery service and product labels available. No cutting service, poor service by staff preparing orders.		
	<i>"Cleanliness is not satisfactory, but I already establish relationship with few vendors at the wet market as I frequent their stalls to purchase fish, chicken and vegetables. Advantage for me as the vendor normally will give discount as a</i>	Poor cleanliness Customer relationship		

	<i>round down figure from my purchase price.”</i>			
NFT	<i>“Yes, definitely, especially when purchasing fish.” “I am not comfortable to choose fish or vege via mobile devise – tak puas.”</i>	Comfortable doing self-inspection	Assurance	Intrinsic Value
	<i>“Yes – need to judge the quality myself I don’t trust that the product I choose online will be as what I expected.”</i>	Trust		
	<i>“Yes, very important to choose myself The nature of perishable product will not make you receive the same product featured on the website, so I don’t trust online channel for perishable product.”</i>	Trust		
	<i>“Frankly, I don’t know how to judge good quality fish or other produce, so I do not mind for not able to touch the perishable product to purchase.” “I feel ok as long as the information such as product name and price per kilo is available.”</i>	Don’t mind		
	<i>“Yes, need to personally evaluate the freshness. I only trust what I see.” “Not convincing as the image on website do not depict the actual product that I am purchasing.”</i>	Not convincing		
VSB	<i>“Not for perishable items as its daily item – not worth to spend time going from one supermarket to another to buy fish.”</i>	Not worth	Satisfaction	
	<i>“No, I don’t. I seek product variety within the supermarket, not vendor variety.”</i>	Seek product variety, not vendor.		
	<i>“Yes – I go from vendor to vendor at the wet market to seek for best bargain in terms of product size, freshness and price.”</i>	Vendor based variety – product & price.		
	<i>“Yes. As I do shop online, I will look for retailer that offer best price. I normally judge by the chicken price they offer for the weekend.”</i>	Online retailer-based variety - price		
	<i>“Yes, as the wet market has more than one vendor, I can choose vendor that has better quality and price.”</i>	Vendor based variety – product & price.		
Preferred Retail Format	<i>“Supermarket is nearby location, longer business hour than wet market, more convenient to shop with delivery service.”</i>	Nearby, convenient, longer business hour.	Convenience	Shopping Convenience
	<i>“Supermarket has clean environment, convenient as one stop with grocery products and has more assortment such as western/imported produce and able to deliver.”</i>	Clean, convenient, has imported assortment.		
	<i>“Wet market has more assortment to choose from as having more than one vendor for a product category, can bargain price.”</i>	Assortment, price bargain		

	<i>"Online is more convenient as I cook for myself - small quantity purchase and delivery service."</i>	Convenient, delivery service		
	<i>"Wet market has more local assortment such as sayur kampung and local beef."</i>	Local assortment		
Purchase Intention	<i>"No - I don't look for perishable products online."</i>	No intention	Behavioural Adaptation	Purchase Intention
	<i>"No. I have never purchased perishable products online, even during Covid 19 pandemic."</i>	No intention		
	<i>"I don't see the point using omnichannel to purchase perishable products. Its not like purchasing an Ikea product where you browse Ikea website, found the product and choose to go to which outlet to purchase or ask for delivery service and you will get the exact product featured on the website."</i> <i>"As I said earlier, the quality receive will not be the same, so no I don't use omnichannel for perishable product."</i>	Don't see the point		
	<i>"No, I don't do that. I do seek information online to choose best retailer, but I make purchase online once I decided."</i>	Immediate purchase		
	<i>"No, I don't treat shopping for perishable same as shopping for clothes or gadgets where I need to seek information about in the products before purchase. Perishable product shopping will be judging on the product freshness, price ok, purchase on the spot."</i>	Immediate purchase		

When respondents were asked about their shopping experiences for perishable products, most indicated that the omnichannel platform meets their needs. For instance, Respondent 2, who prefers shopping at AEON Supermarket, assesses product quality (PQ) based on how well the retailer maintains freshness in the display, providing him with confidence in the product's quality. Conversely, Respondent 5, a wet market shopper, gauges quality by the fact that local suppliers provide the products to wet market vendors, highlighting the critical role vendor reputation and expertise play in his decision-making process. Regarding service quality (SQ), three out of five respondents highlighted the cleanliness of the retail outlet as a key factor in their assessment. In addition, service quality encompassed aspects such as the clarity and accuracy of product information, particularly regarding expiration dates and product origin (as noted by Respondent 2). Other service expectations mentioned included value-added services from the retailer, such as fish and poultry preparation. All four respondents who preferred shopping at physical stores emphasized the importance of touching perishable products need for touch, (NFT) before purchasing, viewing it as a crucial factor in establishing trust in the product's quality. Additionally, none of these respondents favoured selecting perishable goods virtually. Opinions diverged on variety-seeking behavior (VSB) for perishables: Respondent 1 and 2 associated variety-seeking with a broad assortment within a single retail outlet, while the other three emphasized the importance of having a range of vendors. However, it is evident that product variety plays a significant role in ensuring satisfaction with perishable product purchases.

Based on the findings, a new model was established, as illustrated in Figure 2. PQ and SQ represent the factors that customers anticipate from retailers and can thus be categorized as 'extrinsic values' expected by consumers. PQ and SQ stem from customers' evaluations of the product they receive (Espejel et al., 2007). These extrinsic values suggest that the more distinctive and inimitable the perishable goods are, the greater their impact on the hierarchical quality value system set forth by vendors (Kumar & Grisaffe, 2004).

The NFT translates into assurance, where customers need to ensure through inspection the quality, safety, and freshness of the perishable product. According to (Peck & Shu, 2009), touching products generate knowledge or an emotion that is integrated into shopping behavior to aid in purchasing decisions. Furthermore, high levels of assurance lead to a lower use of the Internet as a purchase channel, particularly for products that require quality to be assessed by touch rather than only visually appraising the product (Citrin et al., 2003), which is consistent with one respondent's response of "Not convincing." VSB is a cognitive commitment that can be converted into contentment, which is critical because when customers are dissatisfied, they seek alternatives to similar products or services (Saputra, 2013). These two categories of assurance and satisfaction are further integrated into intrinsic value, in which the aesthetic charms (Wang et al., 2021) of perishable commodities boost customer purchase intention.

When the respondents were asked on the Omnichannel platform, they resorted to shopping convenience. It supports that the convenience is based on the following factors: location, longer business hour operation, cleaner environment, price bargain, delivery service, local assortment in par with the research done by (Rajan et al., 2017) for Indian consumer purchase intention in omni-channel. Figure 2 is the new Extrinsic Value (E), Intrinsic Value (I) and Shopping Convenience (C) known as EIC model derived for the analysis of the study.

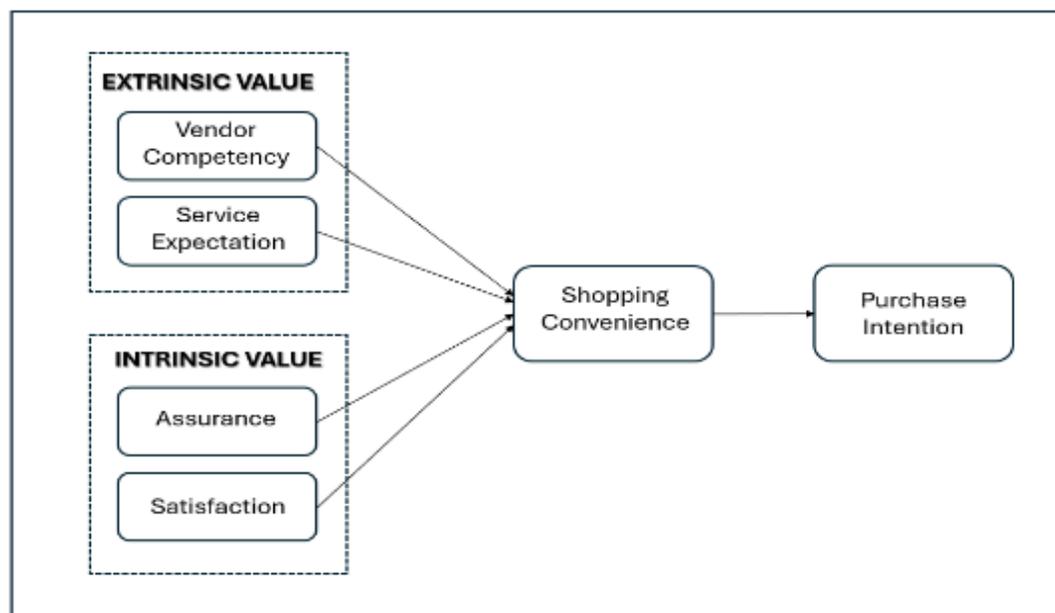


Figure 2: EIC Model

Conclusion

The study's findings may have significant managerial implications, such as advising manufacturing organizations and retailers to assess the presence of sufficient omnichannel mode shoppers before implementing an integrated omnichannel approach for perishable products. Because omnichannel integration is a costly investment, without comprehensive research or an adequate target market, the omnichannel strategy will fail.

Implications and Contribution

The findings of this study will inform managerial decisions about distribution strategy, marketing strategy, and operational strategy for retailers or vendors of perishable products, as well as whether to incorporate omnichannel retail for perishable product distribution. Aside from that, for retailers who are currently operating offline channels selling perishable products, factors such as the importance of product quality, service quality, and whether the display of perishable products will allow their customers to closely inspect the product quality are important factors in determining customer purchase intention of perishable products and customer tendencies to patronize at their preferred retail outlets.

Limitations

This study has limitations because the word 'omnichannel' is relatively new in society. There is a substantial proportion of respondents who did not fully comprehend the words and incorrectly assumed that 'omnichannel' retail is the same as simply internet retail. The questionnaire includes an explanation of the words, but even though it is properly described, there is a good chance that the respondents did not read and understand it thoroughly.

Future Research

Omnichannel retail varies greatly by product category and is typically integrated by manufacturers or merchants for nonperishable products. As this study focuses on the purchase intention of perishable customers to use omnichannel retail to acquire their perishable products, future research should investigate customer satisfaction with omnichannel retail for perishable products. Given the perishability of the products, retailers must understand how customers evaluate their shopping experiences in order to enhance the services they provide.

Research Contribution

The findings of this research could enhance the existing knowledge on omnichannel retail by applying the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework into perishable product purchase behaviour which is a very much underexplored domain for online purchase product category. Durable goods had been predominantly focused on by previous studies while this study on perishable product purchase behaviour introduces a novel EIC model which capture extrinsic value, intrinsic value and shopping convenience which strengthen the theoretical insights into how product quality, service quality, need for touch, and variety-seeking behavior influence purchase intentions in omnichannel context.

Theoretically, this will be able to connect sensory and experiential factors with digital channel integration for perishable product purchase. On the other hand, contextually, this study provides understanding on Malaysian retail landscape where various retail formats –

supermarket, wet market and online platforms could co-exist and compete, thus, offering practical direction to retailers in designing omnichannel strategies for perishable products.

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