

Strategic orientation towards digitization to improve supermarket loyalty in an omnichannel context

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ABSTRACT

In the digital era, the offer of multiple shopping channels in the retail sector has been improved, and customers are changing their shopping habits. For this reason, supermarkets face more complex commercialization processes in the omnichannel context. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to design an omnichannel management model to enhance loyalty through digitalization strategies based on consumer experience. This research is based on a cross-sectional descriptive study using a survey answered by 2,014 responders in Spain. The Partial Least Square (PLS) method was applied to test the hypotheses of the proposed model. The results confirm that the emotional and rational consumer experience plays a key role in generating satisfaction and engagement with retail; therefore, businesses should know that their actions in this regard will indirectly impact consumer loyalty.

1. Introduction

In the last decade, the evolution of digital technologies has significantly transformed both innovation and entrepreneurship, with broad organizational and policy implications (Nambisan, 2017; Nambisan et al., 2019; Yoo et al., 2010). Digital transformation has extended throughout all media, bringing disruptive consequences for companies, including new business models, new types of products/services, new distribution and promotion channels, and new types of customer experiences and behaviors (Nambisan et al., 2019). Companies, therefore, need to transform to succeed in the emerging digital world (McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2017).

Convergence Theory suggests that communication and distribution media should be implemented across multiple, coexisting physical and technological channels to reach larger audiences or market segments (Chen & Granitz, 2012).

There is increasing digitalization in retail stores, and their customers are changing their shopping habits. This leads to increased interest in researching omnichannel management, which is growing due to the

development of new technologies and more opportunities to offer multiple purchasing channels to the consumer (Alonso-García et al., 2021). As a result, omnichannel retail faces more complex commercialization processes than both physical store-only retailing and e-commerce (Beck & Rygl, 2015). In this context, the synergetic management of the channels—considering the consumer's experience as a critical factor for adequate consumer satisfaction and, therefore, the generation of loyalty—is one of the great challenges facing retail.

One of the theories about emotions and their relationship with cognition is that of Lazarus (1982). He postulates that when an individual perceives a stimulus, their cognitive faculties elicit arousal and emotion which are associated with that stimulus. The cognitive appraisal of the stimulus is what causes future emotional responses. The general thesis guiding Lazarus' position is that "cognition and emotion are usually fused in nature" (Lazarus, 1982, p. 1019). Therefore, based on this theory, experience (as a variable based on perception) is jointly shaped by emotional and cognitive aspects. Nowadays, the experience factor plays an increasingly important role in determining the success of a company's offer (Gentile et al., 2007). For this reason, in recent years,

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different authors have focused their research on the study of strategies aimed at positively influencing consumers' experiences and satisfying their needs (Molinillo et al., 2020; Pantano & Priporas, 2016; Van Heerde et al., 2019).

Previous works have highlighted the importance of the industry 4.0 study (Frank et al., 2019) that contemplates the exchange of information and the integration of the supply chain (called the Smart Supply Chain), synchronizing production with suppliers to reduce delivery times (Ivanov et al., 2016), which allows for a better shopping experience. Likewise, technologies can be integrated into final products (called in the literature Smart Products) that can provide data feedback for new product development (Dalenogare et al., 2018; Tao et al., 2018) and provide new customer services and solutions (Porter & Heppelmann, 2015). Thus, these developments enable new business models such as product-service systems, which create new opportunities for manufacturers and service providers (Zhong et al., 2017; Ayala et al., 2019). The present work helps to advance the literature and illuminate the managerial and social implications of this new industry context resulting from digitization.

Previous studies have made progress in describing partial models of consumer behavior in traditional stores or e-commerce. In contrast, one of the most original aspects of this work is the analysis of a complete model that examines a broad set of indicators. These indicators influence consumer loyalty through satisfaction and engagement as moderating variables and focus attention on the consumer experience in the new digital context, omnichannel retailing. Another novelty of this study is the sample size and the design, which allows it to contribute to the understanding of a broader spectrum of consumers.

Despite the growth in the number of supermarkets in recent decades, they need new strategies to compete with other successful retail formats, such as discount shops focused mainly on price strategies. Especially in periods of crisis such as the one caused by the COVID19 pandemic, consumers are more sensitive to price reductions, but this type of strategy leads to price wars where no one wins in the long run. Therefore, supermarkets should not only compete with location and service strategies (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2019; Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2017) but also contribute through digitalization strategies that facilitate consumer shopping from anywhere, anytime and from any device (Beck & Rygl, 2015; Belk, 2014). Additionally, the pandemic has forced organizations to work in a more digital environment (Tortora et al., 2021; Reuschl et al., 2022), which has multiplied opportunities (Savić, 2020; Schilirò, 2020), despite the resistance of some companies and organizations to supporting the digital transformation (Fitriasari, 2020). Likewise, a positive customer shopping experience causes a competitive advantage that makes consumers revisit the supermarket (Terblanche, 2018). Consequently, the present research analyzes companies' strategic

orientation toward digitalization intended to improve supermarket customer loyalty in the omnichannel context.

The main objective of this research is to design an omnichannel management model in which the customer experience, both cognitive and emotional, positively influences engagement and satisfaction in the shopping process, enhancing customer loyalty in supermarkets. For this purpose, the proposed model is measured and evaluated using PLS-SEM. The results highlight that the emotional and rational experience of the consumer plays a vital role in the process of generating satisfaction and engagement, which has an impact on loyalty.

2. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

2.1. Research framework

This approach, with the hypotheses explained below, can be seen in the proposed model in Fig. 1.

2.2. Research hypotheses

The development of markets with increasingly competitive products, coupled with a better-informed consumer, requires supermarkets to develop marketing strategies to differentiate their products. Academics and marketers point to customer experience as a means of differentiation. Customer experience can be defined as an internal subjective response to an interaction with a product or service (Gentile et al., 2007; Japutra et al., 2020; Rose et al., 2012) and can be positive or negative.

Previous research on offline and online retailing has focused only on the affective experience (Barari et al., 2020), which limits the analysis of other experiential states. However, the present study considers the consumer experience as consisting of two fundamental dimensions, the cognitive dimension, and the affective dimension, as pointed out in recent literature (Bleier et al., 2019; Brakus et al., 2009; Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2022; Gentile et al., 2007; Hoffman & Novak, 2018; Molinillo et al., 2020).

The affective experiential state can be considered a set of mental processes, including emotions, moods, and attitudes that consumers have once they are aware of a firm's products or services (Bilgihan et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2015). So, emotional experience is decisive in shopping behavior, so retailers must channel all their activities, interactions, and offers to create unique customer experiences (Terblanche, 2018).

Therefore, the importance of emotional aspects in generating positive experiences can be regarded as established. Thus, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

Hypothesis H1a (H1a): *Emotional experience is a component of the*

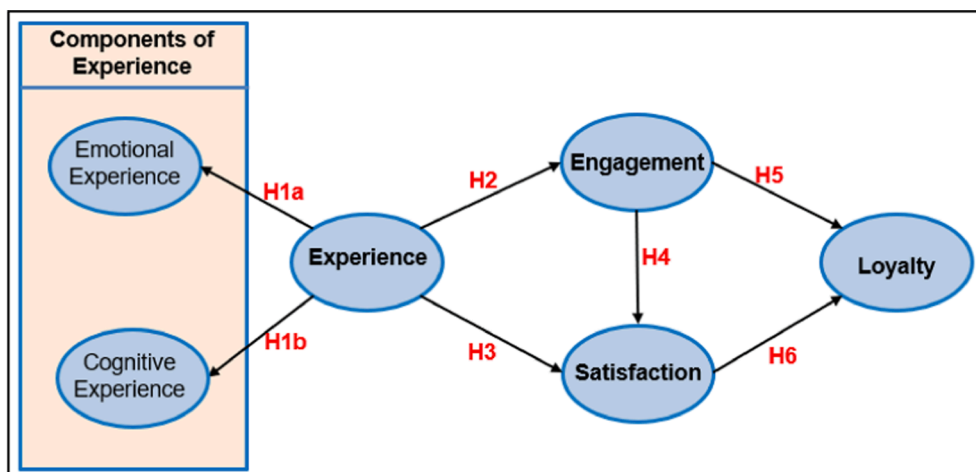


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

consumer experience.

Likewise, consumer experience is the multidimensional impression or outcome that is taken away, resulting from the consumer's emotional or cognitive encounter with products, services, and companies (Bagdare & Jain, 2013; De Keyser et al., 2015).

With regard to the cognitive dimension, studies of consumer behavior have shown that cognitive experience captures the effect of cognitive aspects such as cognitive curiosity and concentration (Pelet et al., 2017), efficacy (Gao & Bai, 2014), functional features (Bilgihan et al., 2016), informativeness, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness (Chen et al., 2018; McLean et al., 2018).

Numerous studies argue that consumers' experiences occur within themselves, and the outcome or consumer experience depends on how consumers react to staged encounters from a specific situation or state of mind (the effect of cognitive aspects) (Walls, 2013).

More recent studies have added that customer experience can also take the form of cognitive or perceptual recognition and can stimulate every customer's motivation (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Singh & Söderlund, 2020).

Likewise, in online shopping, cognitive experience influences consumers' perceptions, evaluations, and cognitive decision-making (Molinillo et al., 2020). Therefore, the following hypotheses can be established:

Hypothesis H1b (H1b): Cognitive experience is a component of the consumer experience.

Customer experience and consumer engagement are seen as indicators of success in building relationship marketing (Zaid & Patwayati, 2021). Customer experience is the customer's internal, subjective response. It can result from interactions performed directly or indirectly by the company (Tyrväinen et al., 2020) and from the outcomes of the consumer's interactions with the company, whether emotional or cognitive (Godovykh & Tasci, 2020). Each customer may prefer a different type of experience, and companies need to provide the experience that corresponds with each of these customers, reinforcing their ambitions, beliefs, values and/or feelings (Roggeveen & Rosengren, 2022). Each dimension of the experience can result in different levels of customer engagement. Grewal & Roggeveen (2020) conceptualize customer engagement as a pyramid, with the cognitive customer experience at the base and the emotional dimension at the apex.

From another perspective, customer engagement can be defined as "a psychological process, a behavioral manifestation and a motivational psychological state" (Zaid & Patwayati, 2021, p. 985).

Thus, consumer engagement in an online brand community and the co-creation of value can be influenced by the sharing of personal experiences on digital brand communication platforms (Brodie et al., 2019; Painsil & Kim, 2022).

In addition, several previous studies have indicated that customer experience has a significant influence on customer engagement (Akram & Kortam, 2020; Gao and Huang, 2021; Iqbal, 2020; Zaid & Patwayati, 2021). In this way, the creation of strong customer experiences is a key topic in the services marketing field, as customer experience has repeatedly been associated with customer engagement behaviors (Roy et al., 2022). Therefore, our second hypothesis is:

Hypothesis H2 (H2): Customer experience positively influences customer engagement.

Customer satisfaction is one of the most examined constructs in the marketing literature (Deyalage & Kulathunga, 2019). It plays an important role in the competitive environment due to its ability to retain existing customers and introduce new ones (Tran, 2020; Tandon et al., 2017). An essential component of satisfaction is customer experience. The customer experience can also work cumulatively, so that the sum of different types of experience generates a satisfactory result for the consumer of a product or service (Danaher & Mattsson, 1994). This variable has become a mainstay for many organizations seeking to increase customer satisfaction through value generation, aiming to produce positive customer experiences that impact satisfaction (Deyalage &

Kulathunga, 2019; Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Prebensen et al., 2013; Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2004; Williams & Soutar, 2009).

Recent studies have identified customer experience as a key antecedent of consumer-related constructs such as satisfaction, intention to use, and intention to repurchase in e-commerce web environments (Martin et al., 2015; Rose et al., 2012) websites (Agrebi and Jallais, 2015) and retailers' mobile apps (Iyer et al., 2018; McLean et al., 2018; Molinillo et al., 2020). Thus, consumer experience has become a critical component of consumer satisfaction, understood as the personal experience of purchase, consumption, or use (Schmitt, 2006), and has increasingly influenced consumers' judgments.

A highly positive customer experience will have an impact on increasing customer satisfaction (Cachero-Martínez & Vázquez-Casielles, 2017; Jaiswal & Singh, 2020; Prebensen et al., 2013; Quach et al., 2022; Zaid & Patwayati, 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

Hypothesis H3 (H3): Customer experience positively influences customer satisfaction.

In omnichannel retailing, the integrated channels enable customers to participate in all facets of the retailer's activities in addition to shopping (Gao & Huang, 2021). Customer engagement is defined as "a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal object in focal service relationship" (Brodie et al., 2019). Many investigations have shown that customer engagement is a concept with specific representations of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral features (Brodie et al., 2019; Dessart et al., 2016; Hollebeek et al., 2019; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Vivek et al., 2012; Wirtz et al., 2013). Given the cognitive and emotional features of customer engagement in omnichannel retailing, customer engagement is a psychological state that emerges through a customer's interaction with a specific brand or firm to achieve the co-creation of value (Bowden, 2009; Calder et al., 2016; Hollebeek et al., 2021; Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Nardi et al., 2020; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Sprott et al., 2009; Witell et al., 2011). As a behavioral feature, customer experience refers to the behavior of current and potential customers towards a brand or firm that goes beyond exchange situations (Beckers et al., 2018; Harmeling et al., 2017; Kang et al., 2021; Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2015; Vivek et al., 2012).

Customer engagement in this marketing process consists of repeated interactions that favor retailers and strengthen customer investment in a brand or firm and can take place in many different settings. This includes customers contacting retailers directly, interacting on social media, writing reviews, blogging, etc. (Chen et al., 2020; Hollebeek et al., 2019; Vivek et al., 2012; Zaid & Patwayati, 2021). Gupta et al. (2018) and Islam et al. (2019) analyzed this aspect of customer engagement and described it as a communication or interaction between stakeholders such as customers and retailers through various channels.

The evolution of marketing technology tools, especially social and digital media, has not only increased customer engagement but also helped customers become active co-creators, contributing to the brand equity of companies (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Chen, 2017; Yoong & Lian, 2019).

Both customers and firms can trigger customer engagement (Álvarez-Milán et al., 2018; Vivek et al., 2012). Customer-initiated engagement tends to be produced in online channels, such as interacting with other current or potential customers in online communities, review-writing, or blogging (Beckers et al., 2018; Vivek et al., 2012). Firm-initiated customer engagement will be based on the firm's strategies, such as organizing events or programs (Beckers et al., 2018).

The content, causes, and effects of customer engagement vary according to the context (Hollebeek et al., 2019). Previous studies have argued that customer engagement generally has a positive impact on customer satisfaction (Al-Dmour et al., 2019; Marino & Presti, 2018). Therefore, the next hypothesis is:

Hypothesis H4 (H4): Engagement positively influences consumer satisfaction.

Customer loyalty has been much studied in the literature. In the omnichannel context, customer loyalty is approached as the result of cognition between customers and retailers (Lewis & Soureli, 2006; Mainardes et al., 2020). Customer loyalty is characterized as long-term fulfillment with the commitment to repurchase or revisit in the future (Oliver, 1999). So, customer loyalty is broadly measured in terms of repurchase intention and word of mouth about the brand or firm (Chan et al., 2014; Yi & La, 2004).

When the relationship between the company and its customers is based on commitment, it creates loyalty to continuing to choose the company's products or services regularly (Gupta et al., 2018). In this way, current and potential customers tend to invest their time and energy in the retailer, so their level of engagement helps to retain an ongoing relationship with the retailer (Gao & Huang, 2021).

Many studies, theoretical and empirical, have researched the outcomes of customer engagement, focusing on customer value, loyalty, and financial results (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2013; Hapsari et al., 2020; Hollebeek et al., 2019; Islam et al., 2019). Pansari and Kumar (2017) argued that a company's customer engagement activities can generate tangible and intangible returns, such as repeated purchases and word of mouth, which are items of customer loyalty (Sprott et al., 2009). So, customer engagement seeks to stimulate their voluntary and autonomous participation (Harmeling et al., 2017). Engaged customers who have a strong emotional bond to the company provide great value (Bowden, 2009; Sashi, 2012), and customers who are enthusiastic about the firm are more willing to take this firm as their first option to buy and promote it to those around them.

Digital media, especially social networks, contribute to engagement by supplanting traditional media in establishing connections, attracting customers, creating experiences, and maintaining long-term relationships among multiple stakeholders (Lariviere et al., 2017; Majeed et al., 2022).

One indicator of successful customer engagement is an improvement in consumption and demand for a product or service (Islam et al., 2019). A good relationship between the firm and customers based on engagement will create loyalty to continue to choose the firm's products or services more regularly (Gupta et al., 2018). However, consumer engagement is dynamic and can show different intensity levels over time, reflecting different states of engagement (Brodie et al., 2019).

Customer engagement also has a positive impact on customer loyalty (Hapsari et al., 2020; Molinillo et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020; Mills et al., 2022). Companies use customer engagement strategies to create a long-lasting customer-brand relationship via the internet (Santini et al., 2020). Therefore, this study developed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis H5 (H5): *Engagement positively influences consumer loyalty.*

In the literature on omnichannel retail, customer satisfaction can be defined as a feeling that results from a purchase evaluation in which actual and expected perceptions are compared (Vasic et al., 2019).

Previous models, in virtual environments, emphasize the critical role of engagement in positively influencing consumer behavior. The present research employs (Schivinski et al., 2020) COBRA model (Consumer Online Brand Related-Activities) in the omnichannel environment to explain the links between customers' satisfaction, engagement, and repurchase intentions.

Customer satisfaction has also been regarded as the cumulative result of consumers' experience, evaluated post-hoc, with a good or service (Pandey et al., 2020). In e-commerce, customer satisfaction can be measured by order fulfillment, product variety, and website usability (Pandey et al., 2020).

Customer loyalty is also a key indicator of an effective business strategy (Otsetova, 2017). In e-commerce, customer loyalty occurs when the first choice of the product or service to make purchases can be satisfied, and then consumers make repeated and regular purchases in the medium and long term (Nguyen et al., 2020; Pandey et al., 2020; Rizan et al., 2020). Two aspects of customer loyalty can be measured:

behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty (Otsetova, 2017). Customer loyalty in e-retailing can be measured by using indicators such as how many times they saw positive things, encouraged or posted a positive message, and whether they intend to continue to act or recommend through digital channels (Pandey et al., 2020). Other measures are first-choice website, favorite website for buying particular kinds of product, and the best retail website on which to do business (Vijay et al., 2019).

Loyalty is, thus, based on satisfaction, acting as an antecedent to satisfaction in a wide variety of products and services (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2019; Fornell et al., 1996; Oliver, 1999; Pandey et al., 2020; Yoo, & Donthu, 2001). Moreover, a satisfied customer is more likely to repurchase the product (Gustafsson et al., 2005; Nguyen et al., 2020; Oliver, 1999; Pandey et al., 2020; Rizan et al., 2020) and to recommend the product, engaging in positive word-of-mouth communication with other consumers (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2022; Pandey et al., 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis is raised.

Hypothesis H6 (H6): *Customer satisfaction positively influences customer loyalty.*

3. Methods

3.1. Survey design

A cross-sectional descriptive study was undertaken, for which the primary data were taken from a questionnaire answered by a representative sample of the Spanish population aged 16 to 64 from October to December 2021. During these three months, 2,014 valid questionnaires were collected, implying a sampling error of $\pm 2.23\%$ (with a 95.5% confidence interval and $p = q = 0.5$) (Table 1).

The items were adapted from findings in the literature, which helps to ensure the validity of the measurement scales for all constructs. A focus group was held in July 2021 to determine the relevance of the items. The focus group comprised ten people: three professionals who work in different retail companies, four regular weekly supermarket shoppers who buy their products in physical and online supermarkets, and three researchers with expertise in retail. Following this qualitative research, the questionnaire was finalized.

The questionnaire has two sections. Part 1 includes questions about the respondents' buying behavior and demographic characteristics. Part 2 examines the five dimensions of the proposed model, with 32 items measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 ("completely disagree") to 5 ("completely agree"). The results determined how these items were filtered, and the final number of items was 26. These were: five items for emotional experience (Molinillo et al., 2020), four for cognitive experience (Molinillo et al., 2020; Tyrväinen et al., 2020), five for engagement (Gao & Huang, 2021; Vivek et al., 2012), six for satisfaction (Molinillo et al., 2020; Pandey et al., 2020), and six for loyalty (Otsetova 2017) (Table 2).

A pretest was launched in September 2021 on a representative sample of the Spanish population, 40 people between 16 and 64 years of age, distributed by gender and age in the same proportions as the Spanish population. After this process, some typos were corrected, and all questions were validated. The final questionnaire was launched on the main social networks from October to December 2021 through a discretionary non-probabilistic sampling by quotas by gender and age.

Table 1
Technical datasheet.

Universe	Males and Females Aged 16–64
Geographical scope	Spain
Fieldwork	From October to December 2021
Sampling	Discretionary non-probabilistic by quotas
Sample	2,014 valid surveys
Sample error	$\pm 2.23\%$ with a 95.5% confidence level and $p = q = 0.5$

Table 2
Scales of the model’s constructors, factor loading, reliability, and validity.

Factor Loadings		Sources of Adoption
Emotional experience RVM: Cronbach’s alpha: 0.87, Composite reliability: 0.90, AVE: 0.66		
Unhappy/Happy	0.88	Molinillo et al. (2020)
Sad/Content	0.88	
Annoyed/Pleased	0.76	
Calm/Excited	0.75	
Relaxed/Stimulated	0.74	
Cognitive experience RVM: Cronbach’s alpha: 0.82, Composite reliability: 0.88, AVE: 0.65		
Most times in my supermarket I feel immersed	0.79	Molinillo et al. (2020); Tyrväinen et al. (2020)
It is nice to test products in my supermarket	0.84	
Get inspiration and new ideas when visiting the website	0.78	
Visiting the website evokes curiosity	0.79	
Engagement RVM: Cronbach’s alpha: 0.84, Composite reliability: 0.89, AVE: 0.61		
I pay much attention to anything about my supermarket	0.74	Gao and Huang (2021) Vivek et al. (2012)
Anything related to my supermarket catches my attention	0.79	
I enjoy spending time in my supermarket	0.81	
I try to fit my supermarket into my schedule	0.81	
I enjoy shopping in my supermarket more when I am with others	0.73	
Satisfaction RVM: Cronbach’s alpha: 0.90, Composite reliability: 0.93, AVE: 0.68		
I am satisfied with my supermarket	0.79	Molinillo et al. (2020); Pandey et al. (2020)
My supermarket is successful	0.77	
My supermarket has met my expectations	0.75	
The best customer service	0.84	
Fulfillment in terms of time, quality, quantity, and location	0.89	
A wide variety of product portfolios on the website	0.88	
Loyalty RVM: Cronbach’s alpha: 0.92, Composite reliability: 0.94, AVE: 0.71		
Actual repeat purchasing	0.90	Otsetova (2017)
Positive word of mouth	0.84	
Continuing preference for the same service	0.73	
Repurchase intention	0.83	
Willingness to recommend the service to the others	0.87	
Demonstrating resistance to switching to the competitor	0.87	

Note: RVM = Reliability and Validity Measures.

3.2. Sample size and composition

We aimed to obtain more than 2,000 valid questionnaires, in order to reach a solid, sample, representative of the Spanish population in terms of gender and age. The total number of validated questionnaires received, from supermarket consumers who purchase both online and offline, was 2,014, representative of the Spanish population. 44.2 % of the sample were male, 55.8 % female. The age-breakdown was: 8.7 % 16–19 years old, 40.0 % 20–39, 33.8 % 40–54, and 17.5 % 55–64. On level of education, 10.9 % had only elementary schooling, 35.6 % had completed secondary school, and 53.6 % had attended tertiary education. The monthly family income levels were as follows; for 8.3 % it was below €1000; for 34.1 % it was €1000–1999; for 29.2 % it was €2000–2999; for 19.5 % it was €3000–4999 and for 9.0 % over €5000 (Table 3).

3.3. Measurement model: Reliability and validity

The popularity and growth of structural equation modeling (SEM) result from the need to test complete theories and concepts (Rigdon, 1998). These methods succeed largely because they can assess the

Table 3
Sample information.

Gender	%	Total 2,014
Male	44.2	891
Female	55.8	1,123
Age	%	Total 2,014
16–19	8.7	175
20–39	40.0	805
40–54	33.8	681
55–64	17.5	353
Level of studies	%	Total 2,014
Primary education	10.9	219
Secondary education	35.6	716
Higher education	53.6	1,079
Monthly family income (EUR)	%	Total 2,014
<1,000	8.3	160
1,000–1,999	34.1	659
2,000–2,999	29.2	565
3,000–4,999	19.5	377
5,000 or more	9.0	174

measurement of latent variables and test the relationships between them (Babin et al., 2008). The SEM allows researchers to simultaneously examine the structural component (path model) and the measurement component (factor model) using a single model. PLS was used for the estimation procedure because it is especially useful when researchers have to work with a moderate non-normal distribution and avoid transformations of the variables that could produce problems in the interpretation of the model. This tool is more flexible than other options when the phenomenon under investigation is relatively new (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012), as is the case of experience, as is the case of the experience variable in this model, the antecedent of the final dependent variable, loyalty. The variance-based partial least squares technique (PLS-SEM) has been gaining favor in recent years. PLS-SEM works much like a multiple regression analysis (Hair et al., 2011), which is especially valuable for exploratory research. But in recent years, researchers have begun to refer to the measurement model evaluation step in PLS-SEM as Confirmatory Composite Analysis (CCA), whose goal (as in factor analysis (CFA)) is the confirmation of measurement theory (Henseler et al., 2014). Hubona et al. (2021) used the term “measurement quality confirmation method” (MCMQ) and “partial least squares confirmatory composite analysis” (PLS-CCA).

In this method, before assessing the results of the coefficients, it is important to evaluate their reliability and the validity of the model. The results of the loadings of the different latent variables were observed (see Table 2) and found to have a value of 0.707 or more. In this case, all loadings exceed 0.73; the 26 items finally selected reach this acceptable level of reliability (Hair et al., 2011). Therefore, six items had to be eliminated from the original scale, four from the engagement variable, one from the satisfaction variable, and one from the emotional experience variable. Moreover, they all load more on their own construct than on another. These results strongly support the reliability of reflective measures, as with the model proposed here. There are two reasons for selecting this option: removing these items does not affect content validity, and the items are correlated. The analysis of internal consistency uses Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). In the case of the first two, both cases exceed 0.80, which is a suggested value as applicable reliability in basic research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). For the AVE, ≥ 0.5 is recommended in all the coefficients of each set of reflective measures in the study. The AVE is also used to assess discriminant validity, but the Heterotrait-Monotrait Correlations Ratio (HTMT) is commonly used in the assessment of discriminant validity in the PLS-SEM model due to the advantages it presents. It is necessary to run the bootstrap routine (5,000 bootstrap samples in our results) and obtain values in the constructs lower than 0.90 (all model coefficients have a value lower than 0.9). In order to control method variance (CMV), several procedural remedies were

applied, such as collecting data from a different source, creating a psychological separation of measurements, protecting the anonymity of the respondents, and improving scale items through their careful construction (Podsakoff et al., 2003). For PLS-SEM, common method bias (CMB) is detected through a full collinearity assessment approach (Kock, 2015). VIF values should be below the threshold of 3.3 (Hair et al., 2017; Kock, 2015). This indicates that the model is free of common method bias. The results of this research obtain values below 3.3, which means that the model is not affected by CMB.

4. Results

4.1. Structural model: Goodness of fit statistics

Absolute fit indices determine how well the model fits a priori, or replicates the data (McDonald & Ho, 2002). In the case of PLS-SEM, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) is introduced as a goodness-of-fit measure (Henseler et al., 2014) that can be used to avoid model misspecification. For the approximate fit indices such as SRMR, the acceptable threshold value is SRMR < 0.10. For this model, the SRMR is 0.086, suggesting an acceptable model fit.

The model results also suggest that the dimensions explain a large amount of variance in engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty, with R2 values of 0.55, 0.38, and 0.68, respectively. The Stone-Geisser (Q2) results for the same variables are 0.33, 0.26, and 0.48, respectively, where a good predictive relevance of the model is achieved with values greater than zero.

4.2. Results of SEM

The conceptual model results (see Fig. 2) show how experience is evaluated as a reflective second-order molecular construct (Chin, 2010). The above discussion demonstrates that the measurements of the components are of high quality. The loads of the two dimensions are also of interest. In Fig. 2, the indicators for experience - emotional experience (0.905) and cognitive experience (0.862) - suggest that they are a good reflection of this variable in both dimensions. Therefore, hypothesis H1 and all the sub-hypotheses are not rejected (Table 4).

Experience (constructed on the basis of its dimensions) positively influences engagement and satisfaction. Both variables (engagement and satisfaction) are strongly positively influenced by experience (0.74 and 0.52, respectively). Given these values, hypotheses H2 and H3 are not rejected (Table 4).

Engagement is proposed as a variable that influences satisfaction and loyalty. The results show positive and significant results (0.12 and 0.08),

Table 4
Summary of hypothesis verification.

Hypothesis	Content	Verification
H1a	Emotional experience is a component of the consumer experience	Supported
H1b	Cognitive experience is a component of the consumer experience	Supported
H2	Customer Experience has a positive influence on customer Engagement	Supported
H3	Customer Experience has a positive influence on customer satisfaction	Supported
H4	Engagement has a positive influence on satisfaction	Supported
H5	Engagement has a positive influence on loyalty	Supported
H6	Customer Satisfaction has a positive influence on customer loyalty	Supported

although with a small influence. Hypotheses H4 and H5 are not rejected (Table 4).

For the hypothesis relating to the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty, it is clear that the relationship is strong and positive, with a high coefficient (0.78). Therefore hypothesis H6 is not rejected (Table 4). The relationship between these two variables sometimes presents more appropriate adjustments to quadratic effects, but here this is not shown by the comparison of the results.

For the analysis and possible further discussion, it seems reasonable to analyze the total effects (including direct and indirect effects) among all the variables that appear in the model. The coefficients are shown to be significant in all cases (Table 5).

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical implications

These results show that experience (through engagement and, more so, satisfaction) is a key factor that adds value to supermarkets in the omnichannel context. These relationships are a great contribution both

Table 5
Total effects (direct and indirect).

	Engagement	Satisfaction	Loyalty
Engagement		0.125* (H4)	0.177* (H5)
Experience	0.741* (H2)	0.614* (H3)	0.538*
Satisfaction			0.780* (H6)

* p < 0.001.

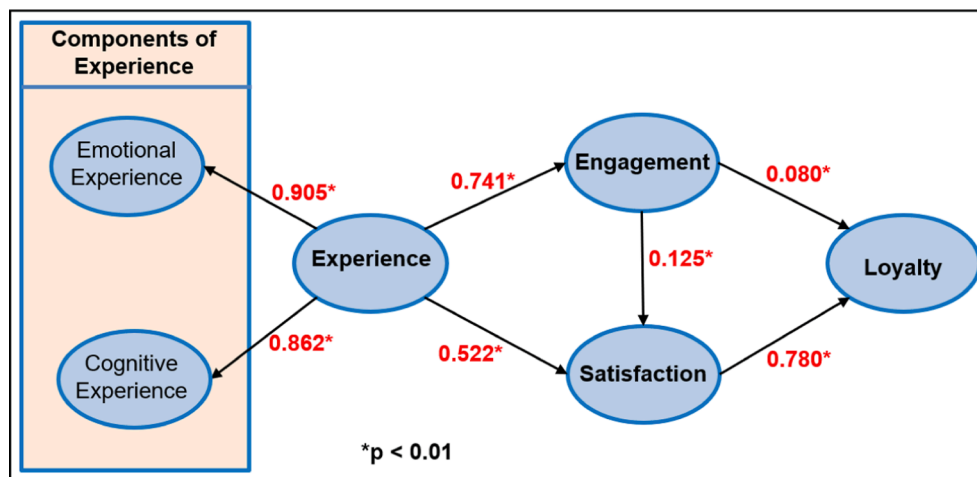


Fig. 2. Model results.

for the literature and for professionals in the sector. Retailers are beginning to digitize their operations and are satisfied with their current efforts and expect business to increase in the future due to digitization. The increase in the level of digitalization in the everyday socio-economic system involves the representation, processing, storage, and communication of most of the information used in the world (Lyytinen et al., 2016). This makes Omnichannel Management an important focus of concern. Past contributions to the literature in this area have focused on the integration of the numerous distribution channels in retail. On the other hand, more recent works (Alonso-García et al., 2022; Vendrell-Herrero et al., 2017) pay attention to Omnichannel in Industrial Marketing Management (B2B). Omnichannel marketing management in supermarket retail (B2C), however, faces a more complex management model than offline retail or e-commerce marketing. One of the novelties of the present work is that the proposed omnichannel management model emphasizes that the customer's emotional and cognitive experience is a key factor as an antecedent of loyalty. That is, a positive customer experience will impact customer engagement and satisfaction, providing customer loyalty. This result is a consequence of the indirect effects of the application of the proposed model. The impact of experience as an antecedent is shown as very relevant through the other variables raised (mainly satisfaction). These findings in omnichannel retailing broadly accord with those in offline retailing and e-retailing and with the advantages of the synergistic management of the channels in the same supermarket.

Positive customer experience can be interpreted as satisfaction with experience (McLean et al., 2018). It will have a direct effect on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Zaid & Patwayati, 2021). Improved customer experience will engender higher customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, so omnichannel retailers must adopt a strategy of providing a positive customer experience (Japutra et al., 2020; Pekovic & Rolland, 2020; Tyrväinen et al., 2020).

A highly positive customer experience has an impact on customer satisfaction (Jaiswal & Singh, 2020; Quach et al., 2022) and customer loyalty (Japutra et al., 2020; Pekovic & Rolland, 2020; Tyrväinen et al., 2020).

This model contributes to the resource-based competitive advantage (RBT) theory (Barney, 1991) because it provides useful marketing strategies through which to understand how and why the firm's performance is influenced by consumer experience, engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty (Wales et al., 2021).

5.2. Managerial implications

Retailers should begin the step-by-step digitization of their business processes. The consumer experience factor can help achieve consumer engagement and satisfaction and, indirectly, loyalty to the company. The final influence on loyalty is very important, given how difficult it is nowadays to increase consumer loyalty in supermarket retailing. In highly competitive markets, it is not enough for marketers to know consumer satisfaction in the omnichannel shopping process; they also need to know what are the drivers of this satisfaction, so that they can manage them more effectively and efficiently.

From a broader perspective in terms of currently evolving dynamic environments, collaboration between SMEs and innovative start-ups should be encouraged and facilitated, as they have several complementary advantages (Cavallo et al., 2021).

The model proposed in this paper should motivate companies and other organizations to devote resources and efforts to focus management attention on positive customer experience in order to strengthen ties with their consumers and ensure that they gain a better emotional and rational experience in the purchase process. Increasing the proportion of consumers with positive experiences in the simultaneous purchase channels will increase consumers' identification with the company. The basic digitalization strategies that positively influence consumer satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty are as follows: investing in secure and

consumer-friendly mobile and web applications for the purchase process (which also allow product testing), investing in customer service, and providing a good portfolio on the website. Through social media, consumers' shared experiences have an impact on engagement, so brands should adjust their marketing strategies to devote more resources to social media and less to traditional marketing activities (Cheung et al., 2020; Zhai et al., 2022; Reuschl et al., 2022; Mostaghel et al., 2022).

Businesses that pay more attention to this will find their activities and sales figures are less sensitive to changes in the environment and their competitors' marketing activities. This will help differentiate companies, improve competitive advantage and sales (Brodie et al., 2019; Islam et al., 2019), and enhance financial performance (Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

In line with previous work, brand investments with higher marketing budgets lead to higher levels of brand equity (Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995). Brand equity, in turn, positively influences preferences and purchase intentions (Gupta et al., 2020).

Therefore, organizations aim to increase customer satisfaction by generating value for them, seeking to produce experiences that have a positive impact on them (García-Henche, 2018). So, implementing strategies that improve the consumer experience in their shopping process (Varadarajan, 2020) through greater digitalization of omnichannel retail generates competitive advantages by gaining greater consumer loyalty. In addition, companies that implement the model proposed in this work will improve productivity through strategic omnichannel management (Torrent-Sellens et al., 2022; Mostaghel et al., 2022).

5.3. Social implications

One perspective that has recently received increased attention is that of social innovation (SI) (Akgüç, 2020; Bennett & McWhorter, 2019; De Wit et al., 2019; Gasparin et al., 2021). Two important actors, referred to as social innovators (Audretsch et al., 2022), are social entrepreneurs and non-profit innovators who develop SI voluntarily (de Wit et al., 2019). Thus, socially responsible companies become SI actors (Mirvis et al., 2016; Szegedi et al., 2016), and corporate actions in social welfare have received increasing attention (Gillan et al., 2021). These actions, known as corporate social responsibility, are considered financially important for investment performance (Lee & Suh, 2022).

Regardless of whether a project is profit or socially oriented, the development and implementation of an innovation always involve high risk (Kuckertz et al., 2020; Vereshchagina & Hopenhayn, 2009). Therefore, a culture in which individuals are willing to take risks should be stimulated through entrepreneurship education (Rina et al., 2018).

In the current economic and social context strongly affected by the COVID 19 pandemic, the study of omnichannel retail management models that facilitate the purchasing process for the consumer via integrated distribution channel models is propitiously timed (Alexander & Cano, 2020; Alonso-García et al., 2022; Tortora et al., 2021). Therefore, this study has important social implications in that it encourages the facilitation of omnichannel retail purchasing processes in which the consumer can choose between the different channels offered and take advantage of the benefits of each one according to their needs at any given time (Alonso-García et al., 2021; Torrent-Sellens et al., 2022). The potential influence on digital innovation of the ability to proactively observe and predict market variables must be considered, as must the role played by social media in terms of sharing and disseminating knowledge (Tortora et al., 2021).

In this way, the model focuses on the consumer experience as the key factor and starting point. Consumers can test the breadth of the retail product portfolio and check all the information on its labeling at the retail company's physical point of sale. Then, after becoming acquainted with the products and defining their brand preferences (Yoo et al., 2000), they can make the purchases in the integrated virtual channels of the same company. They can then manage their time and shopping effort

better, virtually, making purchases more quickly and without needing to travel, which can also bring a better work and family balance.

5.4. Limitations and future research

This study is subject to four possible limitations. Firstly, it was designed as a cross-sectional study during the coronavirus crisis, which may have increased consumption in digital channels. Future research longitudinal studies can be conducted in post-COVID 19 periods, based on panel data, to assess whether consumer behavior in omnichannel retail is maintained over time because this type of shopping experience has already been learned and adopted as a habit. Secondly, the geographical scope was Spain: future studies could extend the sample to other countries. Thirdly, this study applies to retail (B2C), and it may be interesting to measure how the model works in the industrial sphere (B2B). Finally, the object of study was supermarket retail, and in future studies the model could be applied to other types of retail, such as the fashion and technology sectors.

6. Conclusion

Although digitalization is already underway in most companies and contributes to value creation (Ribeiro-Navarrete et al., 2021; Ma & Zhu, 2022; Alexander & Cano, 2020), few studies have examined its impact on the process of generating satisfaction and engagement with retail and consumer loyalty. This research confirms that emotional and rational consumer experience play key roles in satisfaction, engagement, and consumer loyalty.

The results show how enhancing customer experience can be an excellent strategy to develop loyalty in omnichannel retail. Thus, the strategic orientation of retail should go towards digitalization, where customer experience remains a crucial factor. The model presented in this paper demonstrates the desirability of a proactive, forward-looking strategic perspective in which the company actively seeks to anticipate future demand and find new opportunities (Santos-Vijande et al., 2022; Zhai et al., 2022; Reuschl et al., 2022). The findings of this research—that customer experience in omnichannel retail has a significant positive influence on customer engagement, customer satisfaction, and, as a result, customer loyalty—will provide decision-making references for retail managers and professionals in channel management development.

To achieve customer experience and improve customer loyalty, companies must manage consumers' emotional and cognitive experience around omnichannel touch points (Alexander & Cano, 2020), personalization, operations, and company culture (Roggeveen & Rosengren, 2022). This involves using systematized knowledge to monitor customers' experience in order to achieve engagement, identify problems and make improvements that enhance customer satisfaction. It also means using non-systematized knowledge to innovate in relation to consumer experience and loyalty.

Strategies that positively contribute to experience awareness include allowing customers to try products, providing apps, giving them new ideas via the e-commerce website, and ensuring that visits to the e-commerce channels stimulate curiosity. Our results also indicate how much affective experience contributes positively to consumer loyalty. The higher the levels of consumer happiness, pleasantness, joy, excitement, stimulation, and autonomy, the greater the success of the affective consumer experience in omnichannel retailing. Thus, this aspect of the customer experience produces benefits for the company, such as repurchase intention, willingness to recommend the service to others, and resistance to switching to competitors, which are components of customer loyalty. Therefore, omnichannel retail that creates a positive emotional and cognitive customer experience has a direct positive influence on customer engagement and satisfaction and, consequently, on customer loyalty.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Pedro Cuesta-Valiño: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Pablo Gutiérrez-Rodríguez:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Estela Núñez-Barriopedro:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Blanca García-Henche:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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