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The Practicable Aspect of the Omni-Channel Retailing Strategy and Its Impact on Customer Loyalty

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11.1 Introduction

The motion of retailers attempting to integrate their multiple retailing channels began over a decade ago, with the development of the revolutionary tool known as World Wide Web (Lazaris and Vrechopoulos 2014; McCormick et al. 2014), which made the commercial transactions accessible. Through this multi-channel retailing, retailing channels function mostly as independent entities and in isolation (Thrassou and Vrontis 2008; Picot-Coupey et al. 2016; Melacini et al. 2018). This independency however raised a crucial issue: the cannibalization of sales from one channel by another and was deemed hazardous for many businesses operating within multiple channels (Kollmann et al. 2012). In an effort to

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rectify this issue, the concept of Omni-channel was developed. As defined by Levy et al. (2014), Omni-channel retailing is the combination of all shopping channels to provide a seamless experience to consumers. Customers enjoy a complete shopping experience through all the customer touch points: visiting the physical store, e-commerce, reading reviews and blogs about products, and so on. Consequently, physical stores and online stores are deemed as complements to one another rather than competitors (Demko-Rihter and ter Halle 2015).

Furthermore, today's customers are one step ahead of retailers, having progressed to Omni-channel shoppers (Emarketer.com et al. 2019) and utilize a variety of channels to put together a sole purchase, and ultimately 'reward' the retailers who 'empower' them to do so (Emarketer.com et al. 2019). In a study conducted by Oracle Retail (2014), 124 retailers and wholesalers were asked to provide the ways their Omni-channel strategies had improved their business, to which the most cited answers were that their strategies improved customers' loyalty by 66%, and that brand interaction also increased by 44%. This clearly portrays just how an integrated Omni-channel approach brings businesses closer to their customers.

11.2   Theoretical Foundation

11.2.1   Omni-Channel Retailing

According to Mosquera et al. (2018), retail is no longer synonymous with only brick-and-mortar. Although, historically, the retailers' role in society was to sell goods and provide services to consumers (Sundström and Radon 2014), the way retail operates in the last 20 years has changed fundamentally. Retail has progressed from the traditional 'brick-and-mortar' due to the dawn of the online channels and the constant digitalization (Verhoef et al. 2015; Mosquera et al. 2018). Digitalization and the online channels cannot be understood without first describing the progress of the World Wide Web (Prabhu 2016). At the early stages of the web, Web 1.0 was a *read-only web*, described as a set of static websites that did not offer interactive content. Web 1.0 progressed to Web 2.0 and

became a *bi-directional* platform, allowing users to read and write through the platform (Aghaei et al. 2012; Prabhu 2016), allowing anyone the ability of contributing content and interacting with one another. This interaction, contribution as well as customization, has noticeably altered the scenery of the web. This era empowered many remarkable and innovative developments such as social media websites, e-commerce, and m-commerce (Mata and Quesada 2014; Leonidou et al. 2018). The environment alongside rapid technological advancements of web technologies seen in the last decade has created a platform for retailers to conduct business. With technological improvements, a new strategy was developed called multi-channel retailing allowing consumers to interact with the company, but ultimately suffered the silo effect and this lack of communication between them resulted in bad experiences for the consumers. This gave rise to the Omni-channel strategy and revolutionized the retailing environment as it blends the online and offline worlds. With the integration of retailing channels, consumers can begin their shopping journey in one channel and fulfil it in another, resulting in a 'seamless experience' and an increase in engagement (Mosquera et al. 2018). Shifting from multi-channel retailing to Omni-channel retailing is, however, challenging, and even more so attempting to create a seamless and integrated retail experience (Boardman and McCormick 2018). But Omni-channel retail is rapidly becoming the norm. According to Verhoef et al. (2015), the retail industry is progressing towards a seamless Omni-channel retailing 'turning the world into a showroom without walls', and where 'neither the customer nor the retailer distinguishes between physical store and the internet channel anymore' (Wollenburg et al. 2018). An Omni-channel strategy functions as a twenty-first century weapon fighting against the cut-throat competition, which most of the companies are facing daily.

11.2.2 Omni-Consumers and Customer Loyalty

Today, an increasing number of consumers employ a variety of channels simultaneously in an attempt to search and compare for a service or product information so as to complete a sole purchase (Vrontis et al. 2017;

Yurova et al. 2017); thus, the expression Omni-consumer was shaped to describe those consumers. Court et al. (2009) describe current Omni-consumers' shopping habits as anything but straightforward, signifying an alteration to the path-to-purchase, since consumers circle back to different touch points. This change was caused due to the reason that the world travels in the digital era, which provides the availability to consumers to make their purchasing transactions in multiple simultaneously ways, on the platforms of their preference (Court et al. 2009). Consequently, the Omni-channel concept was driven by Omni-consumers desiring from retailers to orchestrate a seamless customer experience across all customer touch points: online and offline (Hilken et al. 2018).

An example of a 'seamless customer experience' is when customers choose their preferred channel to shop from; they might begin by being lured by a television commercial that mentions the company's website. Later on at home, the consumer can find more information online and may proceed to add the preferred product in the websites shopping basket but however does not complete the purchase. On the way to work, this consumer accesses the company's website through the installed mobile application and completes the purchase by selecting the option to pick up the item from the physical store. This example shows that the consumers can circle around different platforms without disrupting their transaction process. The progress that the consumer made through the website does not get lost in the mobile application since they are synchronized. Consequently, the Omni-channel retailing strategy purpose is this 'seamless customer experience' in spite of the purchase phase or the platform or channel the consumer used (Mirsch et al. 2016).

The research discussed in this chapter explored customer loyalty and explicitly the attitudinal perspective of customer loyalty. Numerous researchers have attempted to define customer loyalty (Bakti and Sumaedi 2013), but there is not one single universal definition for customer loyalty but is rather explained as consisting of three elements: conative—behavioural perspective, affective—attitudinal perspective, and cognitive—composite perspective. The attitudinal perspective, conversely, assists in supplemental understanding of loyal behaviour, signify-

ing that customer loyalty is approached as an attitudinal construct. Attitude indicates the extent to which a consumer's disposition towards a service is favourably inclined, with this inclination being reflected by activities such as when customers recommend service providers to other consumers or their commitment to re-patronize a preferred service provider (Dimitriades 2006).

11.3 Theoretical Elaboration: The Omni-Channel Retailing Challenges

Following an extensive literature review, indeed there seemed to be somewhat of a lack in Omni-channel-related theoretical research, as also identified by McCormick et al. (2014) and Picot-Coupey et al. (2016). This research aimed to address a few Omni-channel implementation challenges, and at the same time show how these challenges could be overcome and turned into capabilities so as to satisfy the Omni-consumer. While a relative lack in theory hinders our understanding of Omni-channel strategy, there also is limited application of Omni-channel strategy amongst retailers, with those few adopters facing a number of significant challenges to overcome and successfully implement an integrated Omni-channel strategy in their organization (Emarketer.com, et al. 2019; Oracle Retail 2014; Picot-Coupey et al. 2016). The specific challenges retailers are facing include (but are not necessarily limited to) (1) implementing information and communication technologies (ICT)—technological advancements (Lazaris and Vrechopoulos 2014) and information systems, (2) business intelligence (BI) (David Stone and David Woodcock 2014), (3) implementing customer relationship management (CRM) (Demko-Rihter and ter Halle 2015; Hailey 2015), (4) re-designing the supply chain (Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson 2014), (5) performing Omni-channel marketing (Demko-Rihter and ter Halle 2015), and (6) eliminating the silo effect (Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson 2014; McCormick et al. 2014). Dealing with these challenges, retailers will be able to provide a seamless, coordinated, customer-driven Omni-channel approach to Omni-consumers.

11.3.1   Challenge 1: Information and Communication Technologies

According to Lazaris and Vrechopoulos (2014), the term 'Omni-channel retailing' was first coined following a study of International Data Corporation (IDC's) Global Retail Insights research unit in 2009. Although Omni-channel retailing was initially used as a buzzword, it gained industry credibility when information and communication technologies became more mainstream. These technologies (e.g. mobile devices, in-store technologies, augmented reality, location-based services) were both online and offline, intertwining all retailing channels and providing a 'seamless integrated experience' for consumers, and at the same time empowering retailers with valuable tools. This further gave rise to digital marketing connecting current and future customers with retailers digitally (Vrontis et al. 2017).

Retailers need to utilize technology in their physical stores that interacts with customers providing an integrated customer experience. This kind of in-store technology creates a holistic shopping experience and it should be practical, enjoyable, and interesting in order to enhance the customers' overall shopping journey (Juaneda-Ayensa et al. 2016; Lazaris and Vrechopoulos 2014; Parise et al. 2016). While in-store technological solutions develop innovative opportunities for differentiation and succession in the Omni-world, they could be challenging to implement due to limited resources, mainly of a financial nature. However, brands need to grasp this digitalized opportunity and reinvent the physical store so as to improve customers' experience (Parise et al. 2016), drive growth (Lazaris and Vrechopoulos 2014) and have a positive impact on sales (Parise et al. 2016).

An in-store technology could be used as 'virtual agents'. These 'virtual agents' can take the form of live experts that connect with customers through video conferencing, or interact with consumers through smartphone applications or augmented reality technology (Parise et al. 2016). Virtual agents interact with customers, answering any questions and provide recommendations and advice. Another in-store technology could be augmented reality software, for example, touch-screen recommenders, virtual mirrors, and in-store product videos. Sephora, a cosmetics retailer, introduced virtual mirrors in their physical stores and consumers could

see what they would look like wearing different kinds of make-up. This interactivity gives consumers a sense of control as they converse with the brand about their desires and needs. Based on a large-scale survey of U.S. shoppers, 71% of respondents wanted access to in-store digital content, 85% would prefer self-serve in-store digital access, and 70% believe a personalized experience (e.g. service, advice, offers) would encourage them to make more purchases (Parise et al. 2016). These findings further support the need for integrating ICT in the Omni-channel strategy of a retail establishment, combining the touch-and-feel information gathered in the physical store, with online content thus establishing an Omni-world (Lazaris and Vrechopoulos 2014).

11.3.2 Challenge 2: Business Intelligence Systems

Recent technological advancements in information systems, such as the arrival of Business Intelligence systems, have expanded the ability of businesses to gather and analyse data for the decision-making process (Shollo and Galliers 2016). According to Stone and Woodcock (2014), information systems such as business intelligence are required to gather customers' data in a timely manner. Business Intelligence (BI) can be described as 'the engine room of interactive marketing', including a mixture of technologies, architectures, procedures, and methodologies that converts unprocessed data into advantageous business information. The authors further stress that a Business Intelligence system succession relies on businesses developing their processes and people and system capabilities so as to interact dynamically with the consumers in all available channels (Stone and Woodcock 2014). The challenging part, however, is in managing and analysing large volumes of data for the purpose of transforming raw collected data into useful business information (Stone and Woodcock 2014) and consequently using them to support the decision-making process of an organization (Shollo and Galliers 2016).

11.3.3   Challenge 3: Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Demko-Rihter and ter Halle (2015) place customer relationship management (CRM) as a key component in achieving the integrated Omni-channel vision, given that customer centricity relies at the heart of an Omni-channel strategy. CRM can be described as the course of action of boosting customers' satisfaction levels and loyalty and offering them a one of a kind purchase experience carried through traditional and non-traditional channels that position customers in the heart of the retailers' strategy and provide an imperative competitive advantage to the retailers.

CRM has become somewhat of a standout amongst the most dynamic innovation of the millennium (Hasan 2018). This application gathers customers' data from all the customers touch points which enable companies to have a holistic view of them. Analysing the huge amount of customers' data efficiently and effectively in order to extract relevant information results in achieving the maximum insight into the behaviour and needs of the customers throughout their customer journey (Trautmann et al. 2017). The outcome of employing such a customer-centric system can provide the organization personalized content for each one of their customers instead of viewing them as a group and can in turn further predict the patterns of their future buys (Hasan 2018).

11.3.4   Challenge 4: Re-Designing the Supply Chain

Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson (2014) stress the need of re-designing the supply chain, and Patange et al. (2015) indicate activities such as purchasing, warehousing, transportation, and distribution along with customer service that could function inside of a sole operation in the supply chain, instead of each operation working in silo. These activities/operations should communicate between them, and it is exactly this synchronization of the supply chain activities that creates customer value (Kuźmicz 2015).

In a successful Omni-channel strategy blurring the lines between the online and offline channels is imperative; hence the product availability,

returns, delivery options, reverse flows, logistics, and inventory management across the channels towards the consumers should be handled (Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson 2014). Nowadays, retailers must contend through an 'increasingly complex distribution system' to get to the end user due to the growth of e-commerce via mobiles, tablets, and other mediums. Additionally, as innovative technologies continue to fade the difference between online and physical channels, retailers are creating new ways of utilizing smart devices as well as social networks so as to engage the end users through the Omni-channel perspective (Kozlenkova et al. 2015).

Today's business world is in a constant state of transformation signifying that businesses need to grasp any opportunity available to keep up and differentiate so as to satisfy the Omni-consumer who demands to be presented with choices such as 'click-and-collect', 'touch-and-feel', 'next or same-day delivery', 'free shipping', 'hassle-free returns policy', 'buy online return to store', and so on. These world transformation and innovative changes are pushing the need for re-designing the supply chain (Strang 2013; Santoro et al. 2018).

11.3.5   Challenge 5: Marketing

Gupta (2016) states that the age-old business mantra 'Customer is king' still exists and the Omni-channel strategy provides companies the most customer-centric approach. Customer centricity is the ability to get and stay ahead by giving long-term value to and from customers, in a way that makes it difficult for the competition to catch up (Naidu and Mashanda 2017). Omni-consumers demand a seamless shopping experience at every interaction or touch point with the company. This could be either during a physical store experience, through e-commerce or m-commerce retail, during home delivery, delivery at store or collection point, or during any other interaction or touch point. Customers want to take advantage of the brick-and-mortar stores, including the ability to try or touch the products, to be assisted by sales consultants, and to live the whole shopping experience; however, they also want all possible product

information, such as reviews, tips, competitive prices, which can only be found online.

A thriving retail strategy should be a mixture of personalized marketing delivered directly to the customers' smartphones and proactive marketing based on the customers' purchase history and data analytics. A personalized customer experience which is at the core of a retailer's strategy is described as a customer-centric strategy. This procedure of boosting customers' loyalty and presenting a personalized purchase experience delivered through various physical and online channels positions the customer in the centre of a retailer's strategy and results in an advantage over their competition (Demko-Rihter and ter Halle 2015). Consequently, marketing plays a vital role in an Omni-channel strategy and must coordinate and integrate between information technologies, information systems, and the supply chain departments of the company. Furthermore, in an effort for goods and promotions to be presented the same across all channels, offline marketers have begun to implement mobile marketing in the physical stores benefiting from e-commerce platforms (Lazaris and Vrechopoulos 2014).

11.3.6   Challenge 6: The Silo Effect

Once the challenges are overcome and turned into fundamental capabilities which will be integrated in a synchronized and coordinated manner, the various departments of the organization will discontinue operating in 'silo' (Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson 2014; Emarketer.com et al. 2019), and retailers will successfully achieve an Omni-channel retailing approach which will satisfy the Omni-consumer demands. In addition, the channels and touch points must be managed as a unit. This unification provides to the consumer the opportunity to experience the brand as a whole and not only the channel (Mirsch et al. 2016). This is further supported by McCormick et al. (2014) who stressed the need for businesses to put an end to managing channels within isolation, given that a consumer has a single perception of a business and does not view a company's departments as separate operating units.

11.4   Research Methodology

This chapter explores the challenges of an integrated Omni-channel retailing strategy in the 'bricks and clicks' retail cosmetics industry of Cyprus, and the impact of this strategy on the attitudinal perspective of customers' loyalty, when implemented by an organization, and specifically in the Cyprus cosmetics 'bricks and clicks' retail industry. Four objectives were set so as to achieve the overall aim of the study: (1) to analyse the specific challenges of an integrated Omni-channel retailing approach; (2) to investigate if existing application challenges of integrated Omni-channel retailing strategy apply to the case under study; (3) to investigate if an integrated Omni-channel retailing strategy would increase the attitudinal perspective of customers' loyalty towards the case under study; and (4) to obtain a better understanding of the Omni-consumers' shopping path.

The design of this research was based on an exploratory qualitative approach and took the form of a single embedded case study through the investigation of a single 'brick and click' retailer, BeautyLine. BeautyLine Stores implement an Omni-channel strategy and operate within the cosmetics industry of Cyprus with 15 stores throughout the island, including an e-commerce website. The reasons which led the researchers in choosing to study BeautyLine Stores are that they are the leading players in the cosmetic industry of Cyprus and are considered to be innovative retailers, and that they are the only ones in the cosmetic retail industry in Cyprus striving to offer an Omni-channel (all-in) experience to the consumers. Additionally, hitherto no other research has investigated the Omni-channel concept in any industry of Cyprus.

Qualitative data was gathered through four 'face-to-face' semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, directed to executives who are considered experts in their respective departments of BeautyLine Stores. The four participants came from different operating departments of BeautyLine Stores. Specifically, the interviewees were the IT executive, the Director of Purchasing and Strategic Planning executive, the CRM executive, and the General Manager of BeautyLine Stores (former Executive Marketer of BeautyLine Stores).

In addition to these four interviews, two sets of focus groups were conducted with customers of BeautyLine Stores. The demographic characteristics of the individuals that participated in the first focus group were middle-aged women, specifically 40 to 60 years old. The reason for choosing solely women was because women constitute the majority of shoppers in the cosmetic industry, supported also by Gupta (2013), who suggested that women in the 40–60 age groups are heavy cosmetic users purchasing cosmetics more than three times in a given period of six months. The demographic characteristics of the second focus group were millennial women (ages 18–34) who, based on a cosmetic study, were found to be the heaviest buyers of cosmetic products purchasing more than ten types of products per year (Tabs Analytics 2015). Moreover, millennial women are extremely engaged in their beauty routines, using a broad range of beauty products, spend more time than average on their appearance, and report strong skill levels and regular experimentation (Mintel.com 2017). The two sets of focus groups had the same set of questions as the semi-structured interviews in order for the researcher to be able to compare the research findings employing deductive content analysis.

11.5   Findings and Discussion

The four research objectives initially set were aligned with the research findings. The first objective was to analyse the specific challenges of an integrated Omni-channel retailing approach. This objective was met through the literature review which identified the following challenges: (a) information and communication technologies (technological advancements (Lazaris and Vrechopoulos 2014), information system), (b) business intelligence (BI) (Stone and Woodcock 2014), (c) customer relationship management (CRM) (Demko-Rihter and ter Halle 2015; Hailey 2015), (d) re-designing the supply chain (Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson 2014), (e) Omni-channel marketing (Demko-Rihter and ter Halle 2015), and (f) eliminating the silo effect (Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson 2014; McCormick et al. 2014).

The second objective was to investigate if existing application challenges of integrated Omni-channel retailing strategy, as identified in literature review, apply to the Cyprus cosmetics retail industry and specifically to the case under study. The findings showed that BeautyLine Stores, having implemented an integrated Omni-channel retailing strategy in their organization, have overcome the challenges identified in the literature and are now Omni-channel integrated capabilities. The company further constantly strives to achieve a fully integrated Omni-channel retailing strategy in an effort to satisfy their customers and continue leading in their industry.

The third objective was to investigate if an integrated Omni-channel retailing strategy would increase the attitudinal perspective of customers' loyalty towards BeautyLine Stores. The research findings revealed that an integrated Omni-channel retailing strategy followed by a 'brick and click' retailer, positively influences the attitudinal perspective of customer loyalty, evidenced through positive word-of-mouth, repeated purchases, and favourable attitudes towards the company by customers, all of which are prerequisites of the attitudinal perspective of customer loyalty.

The fourth and last objective was to obtain a better understanding of the Omni-consumers shopping path. The research findings confirm an alteration of the path-to-purchase that is multi-directional and reveal that having an integrated Omni-channel retailing strategy provides a 'seamless customer experience' to the Omni-consumers shopping touch points throughout their shopping path, without any disruptions. Since this strategy anticipates that the Omni-consumers can begin their shopping path in one channel and move to another, it enables them to seamlessly experience and navigate between the channels, thus showing an increase in convenience and engagement. This demonstrates the vital role of channel integration in bringing forth positively consumer responses.

The managerial contribution of this study is that it enhances the understanding of executives of the Omni-channel retailing effects. In addition, this study can be used as an initial point for retailers that are planning to implement an Omni-channel retailing strategy so as to gain knowledge and insight from a retailer that is currently going through this implementation and further development of this strategy. Through this research retailers can see what to expect, and the results of the

Omni-channel concept. Being up-to-date with the current retail trends is paramount not only for survival but to remain competitive in an ever-changing and fierce competitive retail environment. Those retailers who understand the significance and importance of this innovative strategy and have the acumen to invest in it are the ones who will harvest the fruits of an Omni-channel strategy.

11.5.1   Omni-Channel Retailing Framework

Through this study, a comprehensive framework (Fig. 11.1) was developed depicting the visualization of an integrated 'brick and click' retailer adopting an Omni-channel retailing approach. This framework was developed using the literature review as a basis and tested with exploratory research. This Omni-channel retailing framework demonstrates the former challenges and current capabilities of the Omni-channel retailing strategy which are working in a synchronized and integrated manner, resulting in the unification of the internal operating systems/departments, integrating all retailing channels, and communicating a consistent brand image. The current capabilities are business intelligence which enables access to, and analysis of information to improve and optimize decisions and business performance. Customer relationship management manages the company's interaction with current and potential customers and sends personalized content to each one of the company's customers. Activities such as purchasing, warehousing, transportation, and distribution along with customer service function as a sole operation in the supply chain creating customer value. Omni-channel marketing, which must be customer-centric, and information and communication technologies (e.g. in-store interactive technologies) should be linked with all the other aforementioned capabilities. By integrating all capabilities mentioned above, Omni-consumers can choose any channel of their preference to shop or find information from, since the channels/touch points are integrated, consequently diminishing any barriers between the retailing channels. The framework further portrays the Omni-consumers shopping path as multi-directional, meaning that they can start their shopping journey at one channel and continue to the next one based on their
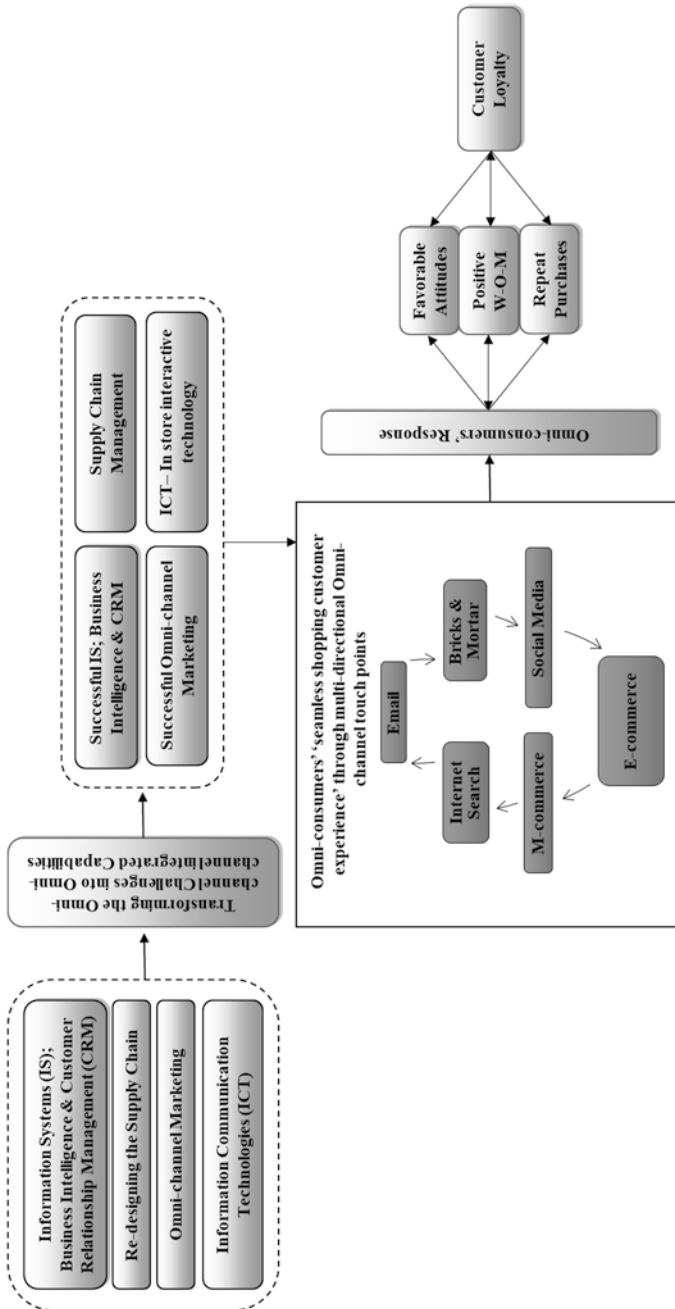
Fig. 11.1   Building a path to a successful Omni-channel strategy leading to customer loyalty

preferences, resulting in enjoying a 'seamless customer experience' through all Omni-channel touch points. Customers exhibit positive feelings by word-of-mouth, repeating purchases, and holding favourable attitudes towards the company, all prerequisites of the attitudinal perspective of customer loyalty.

11.6 Industry Application, Research Limitations, Future Research, and Conclusion

11.6.1 Industry Application

A practical recommendation which originated from the literature review and the research findings is for companies to develop an in-house CRM system which would enable them to better analyse their data and understand their customers so that content could be personalized and could thus potentially increase customer loyalty. Another practical recommendation is to fully integrate companies' channels so as to provide Omni-consumers a 'seamless customer experience' at every channel. By utilizing interactive technology (e.g. augmented reality and virtual mirrors) in physical stores, consumers will be able to experience the online/digital world from within these physical stores, blending the online and offline worlds. An additional recommendation is to establish an m-commerce channel. Smartphone applications provide the demanding Omni-consumers with another platform to shop from. Offering this additional channel, companies will be able to interact further with their customers and could possible integrate a multitude of other services within this application (e.g. possibility for customers to add their loyalty card and scan, collect, and redeem points). It is also further recommended that companies could consider providing a live chat on their e-commerce website, guiding and assisting customers through the entire decision-making process. This should be utilized together with traditional methods of customer service. By providing immediacy, one-to-one interaction can result in higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty. This offers reassurance to consumers that information and assistance are available

throughout their path-to-purchase, and also ensures that customers are less likely to abandon their shopping journey due to lack of support.

11.6.2 Research Limitations and Future Research

The current study presents some limitations. The first limitation is external validity or generalizability because this research was based on a single case study approach that examined a single company. Second, the lack of male participants in the research limited the research findings. The small sample size could be considered a third limitation as small sample groups make it difficult to generalize the findings to a larger population (Kohlbacher 2006). Finally, this study offered an understanding of the cosmetic industry. Despite the fact that the cosmetic industry is characterized by a very lucrative, innovative, and fast paced industry (Kumar et al. 2006), the influence of e-commerce and social media is not limited to this industry only. The whole retailing sector has started to innovate by adopting technologies such as social media, interactive technology, and analytics and is now moving towards an Omni-channel retailing strategy. Consequently, the Omni-channel retailing framework suggested may be also useful to other retail sectors such as the fashion industry.

Attempting to address the limitations of this current study, it is suggested that researchers could further explore Omni-channel retailing especially because theoretical research only dates to around six years ago. This implies that it is a relevantly fresh field of study that needs further research exploration to comprehend. The results of this exploratory study open new avenues for future research and may serve as a basis for expanding and contributing to the Omni-channel framework. Consequently, as the research is based on a single case, transferability to other 'brick and click' retail companies should be explored. In addition, further and more in-depth research is needed in the challenges presented in this study, as well as additional challenges exploration that other type of retailers may face during their Omni-channel implementation stage. The current research provides a foundation for more research to be built on. There is great potential to continue research in this field of study, whilst this research focuses specifically on the cosmetic industry, further research

could be to explore the Omni-channel framework in other industries such as the fashion industry.

11.7   Conclusion

This study concludes that establishing an Omni-channel retailing strategy is imperative for businesses to succeed in this twenty-first century of constant digitalization. Following such a strategy can potentially increase customers' loyalty, retain existing customers, and prevent competition in achieving an increase in market share. The Omni-channel retailing concept is re-establishing the way consumers shop, and retailers must respond to this by introducing new innovative technologies, integrating their channels, analysing customers data at every interaction, and providing product availability at every retail channel so as to meet the fast pace and constant customer expectations in the 2.0 retail world. Finally, through this study the researchers clearly portrayed how a theoretical examination could be applied in practice to provide new knowledge, theoretical contribution to the field, and managerial contribution to industry stakeholders.

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