

Omnichannel Integration and Positive Word-of-Mouth: A Study of Colombo Supermarket Consumers

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to identify the impact of omnichannel integration on fostering positive word-of-mouth (WOM) among supermarket consumers in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka. Focusing on the types of omnichannel integration, namely informational, transactional, and relational, the study investigates how a seamless and unified customer experience across digital and physical channels can drive positive word of mouth among customers in the retail sector.

Design/methodology/approach: Adopting a quantitative research approach, data were collected from 350 respondents in the of Sri Lanka who engage with both online channels, including websites, mobile applications, and social media platforms, as well as offline channels, including physical stores and home delivery services. Multiple regression analysis was utilized to examine the relationship between types of omnichannel integration and positive WOM.

Findings: The results indicate a significant positive effect of omnichannel integration on positive WOM, with relational integration exerting the strongest influence, followed by informational and transactional integration. This suggests that cohesive customer interactions, consistent product information, and seamless transactional capabilities enhance customer experience and drive positive WOM.

Originality: This study's originality lies in its focus on the impact of different types of omnichannel integration on positive word of mouth (PWOM), a topic that has received limited attention in existing research. By exploring this phenomenon within the supermarket sector in an emerging market context, specifically Sri Lanka, it addresses a significant gap in the literature.

Implications: This study contributes to omnichannel literature by revealing how informational, transactional, and relational integration uniquely influence positive word-of-mouth. Theoretically, it extends existing frameworks by empirically demonstrating how these integrations impact trust, convenience, and emotional connections within Sri Lanka's supermarket sector. By enhancing customer experience through integrated channels, supermarkets can leverage omnichannel strategies to strengthen positive WOM and maintain a competitive advantage. Retailers should provide consistent product information and integrate loyalty programs, payment systems, and personalized engagement to build trust, enhance convenience, and drive

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Transactional Integration

customer loyalty and positive WOM. The findings underscore the value of strategic omnichannel practices for retail practitioners, particularly in emerging markets.

Introduction

Omnichannel integration has transformed retail by creating a cohesive customer experience across online and offline platforms, such as physical stores, e-commerce, mobile apps, and social media. This approach enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty by offering a unified, personalized shopping experience (Van Doorn & Verhoef, 2015). Initially, e-commerce created a fragmented shopping experience with inconsistent pricing and poor integration between channels (Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014). Today, many consumers prefer a blend of digital and physical interactions with brands (Chief Marketing Officer Council, 2016). This research focuses on how omnichannel integration impacts positive word-of-mouth (PWOM) in the supermarket sector (Rosario et al., 2016). Positive WOM is crucial for a supermarket's reputation and customer retention. The retail sector's shift towards omnichannel strategies, which blend online and offline shopping, has not been extensively studied in terms of its impact on positive word-of-mouth (PWOM). While PWOM is vital for customer acquisition and retention, existing research often overlooks its nuanced effects in the context of omnichannel integration (Liu et al., 2024). The supermarket sector, with its frequent customer interactions, faces unique challenges in integrating channels, yet the specific relationship between omnichannel integration and PWOM remains underexplored (Van Doorn & Verhoef, 2015). Additionally, there is limited research on omnichannel integration in Sri Lanka, especially concerning its impact on WOM (Konuk, 2019). This research aims to address these gaps by investigating how omnichannel integration affects positive WOM in Sri Lankan supermarket consumers. This study advances theoretical understanding by exploring the impact of omnichannel integration on word-of-mouth (WOM) and examines how seamless omnichannel experiences influence positive WOM. In the meantime, findings of the study would offer valuable insights for supermarket practitioners by demonstrating how effective omnichannel integration can enhance customer experiences and drive positive word-of-mouth. This study investigates how omnichannel integration enhances positive word-of-mouth (WOM), an essential factor in influencing consumer behavior and expanding a brand's reach. By delivering a seamless and cohesive experience across digital and physical platforms, omnichannel integration elevates customer satisfaction and engagement, which in turn fuels positive WOM. With consistent, well-integrated interactions, customers are more likely to share favorable experiences, highlighting the effectiveness of omnichannel strategies in fostering lasting connections and spreading

positive feedback. Despite the significance of WOM in retail, limited research has focused on how omnichannel practices specifically affect its generation, particularly in emerging markets. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the link between integrated customer experiences and positive WOM, providing valuable insights for advancing omnichannel strategies that resonate with today's digitally engaged consumers.

Research Objectives

RO1: To identify whether there is a significant impact of informational integration on positive WOM among supermarket customers in Colombo District.

RO2: To identify whether there is a significant impact of transactional integration on positive WOM among supermarket customers in Colombo District.

RO3: To identify whether there is a significant impact of relational integration on positive WOM among supermarket customers in Colombo District.

RO4: To identify the most influencing type of omnichannel integration on positive WOM among supermarket customers in Colombo District.

Literature Review

Omnichannel Integration

Omnichannel integration is a comprehensive approach to retailing that aims to merge various customer touchpoints such as online, in-store, mobile, and social channels into a single, cohesive system, providing a seamless and consistent customer experience across all channels (Van Doorn & Verhoef, 2015). This strategy reflects a shift in consumer expectations, as modern shoppers increasingly prefer a blend of digital and physical interactions with brands (Chief Marketing Officer Council, 2016). Effective omnichannel integration allows retailers to synchronize communication, services, and products across channels, creating an interconnected shopping experience that boosts customer satisfaction, loyalty, and engagement (Butkouskaya et al., 2023).

The three primary components of omnichannel integration namely, informational, transactional, and relational are critical for developing a robust omnichannel strategy. These integration types allow retailers to enhance the customer journey by ensuring consistency, flexibility, and personalization across all channels (Gerea et al., 2021). Recent studies underscore the importance of omnichannel integration in influencing consumer behavior, particularly by enhancing brand loyalty and encouraging customer engagement across different platforms (Konuk, 2019; van de Sanden et al., 2022).

Informational Integration

Informational integration involves maintaining consistent and accurate information across all customer touchpoints, thereby reducing information asymmetry and building

customer trust (Liu et al., 2024; Solem et al., 2023). Informational integration is particularly crucial for reducing cognitive load, as inconsistent information across channels can frustrate customers and damage brand trust (Lee et al., 2020). Research suggests that such transparency and coherence in information foster positive perceptions and increase customer satisfaction, contributing to favorable word-of-mouth (WOM) behaviors (Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2020). Additionally, high-quality, easily accessible information has been linked to greater customer engagement, a key driver of positive WOM (Cocco & Demoulin, 2022; Sthapit, 2019).

The reduction of cognitive load is a key benefit of informational integration, as it helps prevent customer frustration that may arise from encountering conflicting details across touchpoints. Inconsistencies in product information, such as discrepancies in pricing or availability between online and in-store channels, impose a heightened cognitive burden on consumers, leading to dissatisfaction and eroding trust in the brand (Lee et al., 2020). Conversely, when retailers provide a unified informational framework, customers can make purchase decisions more confidently and efficiently, contributing to a positive shopping experience (Blom et al., 2021). Research shows that such coherence not only fosters customer satisfaction but also encourages positive WOM, as customers are more likely to recommend brands that make their decision-making processes smoother and more reliable (Liu et al., 2024; Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2023).

Transactional Integration

Transactional integration enhances customer experience by offering flexible and convenient transaction options across channels, such as “buy online, pick up in-store” (BOPIS) and seamless cross-channel returns (DeTienne et al., 2021; Gao & Su, 2017). This approach reduces potential friction in the purchasing process, allowing customers to choose how and where they complete their transactions, which boosts convenience and satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2019). Transactional integration also enhances psychological security by making it easier for customers to control their transactions and resolve issues quickly, fostering a sense of reliability in the retailer (Hickman et al., 2020). Research has demonstrated that customers are more likely to engage in positive WOM when they experience smooth, flexible transactions that align with their preferences (Gao & Su, 2017).

Trenz et al., (2020) found that integrated transactional systems encourage customer engagement by reducing abandonment rates, as customers feel more secure and valued when transaction points are linked across channels. Additionally, Carneiro et al., (2015) argue that transactional integration enhances customer-brand relationships by empowering customers to tailor the shopping experience to their preferences, fostering loyalty and advocacy. By facilitating these adaptable, cross-channel interactions, retailers are positioned to encourage positive WOM, as customers appreciate the efficiency and ease provided by a robust omnichannel approach (Donthu et al., 2021).

Relational Integration

Relational integration focuses on personalizing customer interactions across channels to build and maintain strong, long-lasting relationships. This dimension involves the use of customer data to offer personalized experiences, such as targeted promotions, loyalty programs, and tailored recommendations, fostering a sense of connection and enhancing customer loyalty (Frow & Payne, 2009). Relational integration allows retailers to engage customers on a more personal level, which strengthens emotional bonds and motivates customers to share positive feedback with others (Liu et al., 2024). Personalized experiences have been shown to significantly improve customer satisfaction and encourage positive WOM, as customers feel valued and understood by the brand (Junbin & Xinyu, 2022). Research highlights that relational integration's impact on WOM is particularly strong when customers perceive that the brand genuinely cares about their preferences and provides personalized service across all channels.

Positive Word of Mouth (Positive WOM)

Positive WOM is a key outcome of customer satisfaction and loyalty, involving the informal sharing of favorable opinions and experiences with others (Souki et al., 2023). In a retail context, positive WOM is essential as it not only enhances brand visibility but also influences potential customers' purchasing decisions, thereby expanding the customer base (Liu et al., 2024). WOM serves as an effective form of marketing that can significantly impact a brand's growth and reputation, especially in highly competitive sectors like retail (Rosario et al., 2016). For supermarket retailers in Sri Lanka, WOM dynamics are especially crucial, as they rely heavily on building trust and positive relationships with local consumers to foster loyalty (Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2020).

In fact, WOM has been shown to have a higher influence on consumer behavior than traditional advertising due to its perceived credibility and personal relevance (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). Positive WOM not only aids in customer acquisition by reinforcing trust but also cultivates customer retention, as satisfied customers become brand advocates, sharing their experiences within their social networks (Donthu et al., 2021). For supermarkets, WOM is particularly powerful in shaping consumer perceptions and driving repeat business since grocery shopping often involves routine and preference-based decisions (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Furthermore, research suggests that WOM's impact is amplified in collectivist cultures, such as Sri Lanka's, where people place high value on community feedback and shared opinions (Ramya & Ali, 2016). Consequently, cultivating positive WOM through excellent service and consistent omnichannel experiences can be a vital strategy for supermarket retailers in this region to enhance customer loyalty and broaden market reach (Zielinski & Botero, 2020).

Informational Integration and Positive WOM

By ensuring consistent information across channels, informational integration enhances the customer experience, fosters trust, and reduces uncertainty (Ruhanen et al., 2015). The availability of accurate, up-to-date information across channels minimizes cognitive overload, allowing customers to make informed decisions with confidence. This consistent information flow supports positive brand perceptions, leading customers to recommend the brand to others (Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2023). Informational integration not only improves customer engagement but also creates a sense of transparency and trustworthiness, which are essential drivers of positive WOM (Cocco & Demoulin, 2022).

H1: There is a significant impact of Informational Integration on Positive WOM among supermarket customers in Colombo district

Transactional Integration and Positive WOM

Transactional integration enhances customer satisfaction by offering flexible transaction options and seamless purchase experiences. Features such as unified payment options and cross-channel product returns provide customers with added convenience and control over their shopping journeys (DeTienne et al., 2021). Such flexibility not only boosts customer satisfaction but also strengthens the likelihood of positive WOM, as customers are more inclined to share their experiences when they feel empowered and supported by the brand (Teo, 2006).

H2: There is a significant impact of transactional integration on Positive WOM among supermarket customers in Colombo district.

Relational Integration and Positive WOM

Relational integration promotes positive WOM by providing personalized, cohesive interactions that enhance customer relationships. By tracking customer preferences and tailoring experiences accordingly, retailers can foster a sense of loyalty and emotional connection with customers (Frow & Payne, 2009). Personalized loyalty programs, targeted promotions, and consistent customer profiles across channels create memorable interactions that encourage customers to share their positive experiences (Pandya et al., 2023). Research confirms that relational integration plays a significant role in driving positive WOM, as customers value brands that offer individualized, attentive service (Jayachandran et al., 2005).

H3: There is a significant impact of relational integration on positive WOM among supermarket customers in Colombo district

Research highlights that different types of omnichannel integration have varying impacts on positive Word-of-Mouth (WOM) among supermarket customers. Informational

integration enhances customer satisfaction through consistent and accurate information, leading to favorable WOM (Mishra et al., 2024). Transactional integration increases convenience and satisfaction, contributing positively to WOM (Ayuba, 2019), but its effect may be less pronounced compared to relational integration. Relational integration, which emphasizes personalized interactions and relationship management, significantly drives customer loyalty and positive WOM (Frow & Payne, 2009). Thus, the literature supports the hypothesis that types of omnichannel integration do not equally influence positive WOM among supermarket customers in the Colombo District, underscoring the importance of tailored integration strategies (Liu et al., 2024).

H4: Types of omnichannel integration have not equally influenced on Positive WOM among supermarket customers in Colombo district

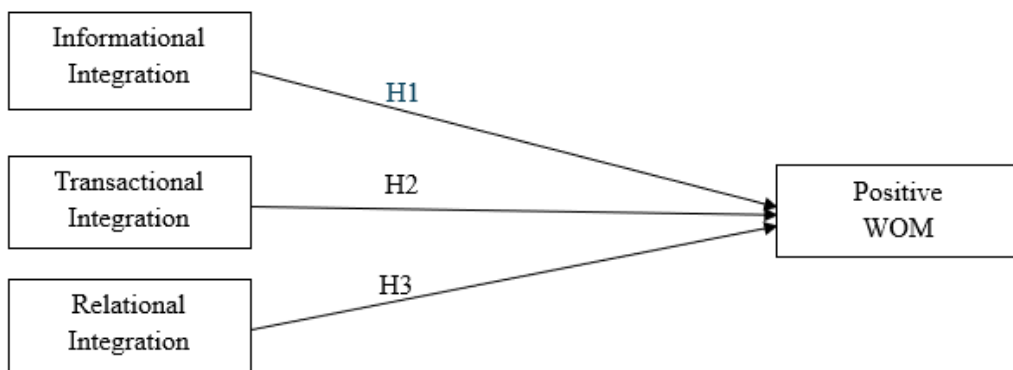


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Author Developed

Methodology

Research Design

This study is descriptive research since it is focused on finding out the relationship between omnichannel integration and positive word of mouth. The research adopts a positivist paradigm to quantify the impact of omnichannel integration on word-of-mouth (WOM) and examine causal relationships through objective measurements. Utilizing a deductive approach, it formulates, and tests hypotheses based on established theories. A cross-sectional design is employed to analyze current consumer behaviors and perceptions, providing a snapshot of relationships between omnichannel integration and positive WOM. The study uses a quantitative methodology to measure relationships and test hypotheses with statistical techniques, enabling objective analysis of the effects of informational, transactional, and relational integration on positive WOM.

Sampling Procedure

The population for this study consists of supermarket consumers in the Colombo district of Sri Lanka who engage with both online channels, including websites, mobile applications, and social media platforms, as well as offline channels, including physical stores and home delivery services. Due to the unknown exact population size of these consumers and the inability to create a precise sampling framework, convenience sampling is employed. This method is used as it is not feasible to establish a complete sampling frame for the target population. While convenience sampling introduces the potential for bias, it is justified in this context due to practical constraints such as time, resources, and accessibility. To mitigate these biases, a sample size of 350 respondents is selected, ensuring statistical reliability and the validity of the findings, while providing adequate data for strong quantitative analyses and achieving generalizable results within the study's limitations.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Techniques

Data for this study was collected through an online questionnaire. The data analysis was carried out using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample, while multiple regression analysis was employed to investigate the impact of omnichannel integration on positive WOM.

Operationalization

The operationalization of the key constructs in this study was based on established measures from prior research. Informational integration was assessed using four indicators adapted from (Oh et al., 2012), transactional integration was measured using four indicators from (Bendoly et al., 2005), relational integration was evaluated with four indicators from (Jayachandran et al., 2005), and positive WOM was operationalized using four indicators derived from (Sweeney et al., 2012). All constructs were confirmed to be reliable and valid and were measured using 5-point Likert-type scales, where responses ranged from '1 = strongly disagree' to '5 = strongly agree'.

Data Analysis

Descriptive Analysis

The analysis of data from 350 respondents reveals significant demographic insights among supermarket consumers in Colombo District. Of the sample, 55% are aged 18-34, with a notable representation of younger shoppers. Females comprise 60% of the respondents, indicating a strong female engagement in supermarket shopping. Higher-income consumers, earning LKR 100,000 and above, account for 50% of the sample, showcasing a substantial presence of affluent shoppers. Professionals make up 35% of respondents, highlighting the influence of this demographic on shopping behaviors.

Additionally, 50% of the respondents are married, and 55% prefer in-store shopping over online channels.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and Validity: The reliability of the variables Informational Integration (II) (0.895), Transactional Integration (TI) (0.891), Relational Integration (RI) (0.867), and Positive Word of Mouth (PWOM) (.843) was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha, with all values exceeding 0.7. This indicates that the variables are consistent and reliable for further analysis. The validity of the variables II, TI, RI, and PWOM was confirmed through factor analysis. Convergent validity was established with KMO values above 0.5 and strong AVE and CR scores.

Table 1
Convergent Validity Measurement

Variable	KMO	BTS Chi square	Sig.	CR	AVE
Standard	>0.5		<0.05	>0.7	>0.5
Informational Integration	.835	817.366	.000	.927315	.76102
Transactional Integration	.813	838.176	.000	.925107	.75533
Relational Integration	.856	1088.111	.000	.948276	.82075
Positive Word of Mouth	.825	980.424	.000	.939389	.79453

Table 2
Reliability Measurement

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Standard		>0.7
Informational Integration	04	0.895
Transactional Integration	04	0.891
Relational Integration	04	0.867
Positive Word of Mouth	04	0.843

Multiple Regression Analysis

To analyze the impact of types of omnichannel integration on positive word of mouth among supermarket consumers and for the identification of the most influencing factor, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted.

Table 3
Model Summary of Multiple Linear Regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.754 ^a	.568	.563	.65803

a. Predictors: (Constant), II, TI, RI, PWOM

This regression analysis table reveals the relationship between omnichannel integration types of Informational Integration (II), Transactional Integration (TI), and Relational Integration (RI) and Positive Word-of-Mouth (PWOM). The correlation coefficient ($R = .754$) shows a strong positive link between the predictors and PWOM. The coefficient of determination (.568) indicates that 56.8% of the variance in Positive WOM can be explained by the model, which reflects solid explanatory power. The Adjusted R Square (.563) further confirms this, accounting for the model's predictor count, while the standard error (.65803) suggests a moderate spread of observed values around the regression line. Overall, this model provides a good fit, showing that omnichannel integration significantly influences Positive WOM.

Table 4
ANOVA for Multiple Linear Regression

	Model	Sum of Square.	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	196.244	4	49.061	113.305	.000 ^b
	Residual	149.384	345	.433		
	Total	345.628	349			

According to the Table V, it explains that the model is significant at 0.05 level of significance ($0.000 < 0.05$) at an F statistic of 113.305. Therefore, the researcher can build a significant model to identify the influence from the types of omnichannel integration towards the PWOM.

Table 5
Coefficients of Types of Omnichannel Integration

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	.202	.147	1.367	.042	
	II	.352	.058	6.030	.000	
	TI	.288	.054	5.352	.000	
	RI	.421	.055	1.325	.001	

Informational integration has a beta coefficient (B) of 0.352 and a significance level of 0.000. Since the significance value is below 0.05, we conclude that the informational integration has a statistically significant and positive impact on PWOM, supporting Hypothesis 1. Transactional integration has a beta coefficient (B) of 0.288 and a significance level of 0.000. As the p-value is less than 0.05, this result indicates that the Transactional integration significantly and positively impacts PWOM, supporting Hypothesis 2. Relational integration has a beta coefficient (B) of 0.421 and a significance level of 0.001. With a p-value below 0.05, this finding supports Hypothesis 3, indicating that the relational integration has a significant positive impact on PWOM.

The beta coefficients (B) for the types of omnichannel integration; informational integration (0.352), transactional integration (0.288), and relational integration (0.421) reveal varying levels of influence on positive word of mouth (PWOM). These values indicate that the impact of each type of integration is not uniform. Relational integration exhibits the strongest influence, followed by Informational and Transactional integration. These variations provide empirical support for Hypothesis 4, which suggests that the different types of omnichannel integration exert differential effects on PWOM.

Table 6
Summary of Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis	Decision
1. There is a significant impact of Informational Integration on Positive WOM among supermarket customers in Colombo district.	Accepted
2. There is a significant impact of Transactional Integration on Positive WOM among supermarket customers in Colombo district.	Accepted
3. There is a significant impact of Relational Integration on Positive WOM among supermarket customers in Colombo district.	Accepted
4. Types of omnichannel integration have not equally influenced on Positive WOM among supermarket customers in Colombo district.	Accepted

Discussion

The findings of this study closely align with and extend prior research, underscoring the critical role of omnichannel integration in fostering positive word-of-mouth (WOM) among supermarket consumers. Consistent with Van Doorn & Verhoef, (2015) who illustrated how integrated omnichannel strategies enhance the customer experience, our results show that informational integration (II) significantly impacts WOM. This outcome is reinforced by Liu et al., (2024), who highlighted that consistent information across channels reduces customer uncertainty, increases trust, and positively influences customer advocacy. Informational integration ensures that consumers have access to reliable, consistent product details, pricing, and availability, which enhances their experience, reduces decision-making anxiety, and makes them more likely to share positive feedback. As today's consumers expect real-time, accurate information, particularly in the retail and supermarket sectors, retailers who prioritize informational integration can establish a reputation for transparency, thereby encouraging WOM.

Additionally, transactional integration (TI) demonstrated a significant influence on WOM. The flexibility of being able to complete transactions across both online and offline channels has become a critical factor for modern consumers, who prioritize convenience and efficiency. This aligns with findings from Nguyen et al., (2019), who observed that omnichannel flexibility positively affects brand perception by making purchasing accessible across diverse platforms. Liu et al., (2024) also supported this, noting that seamless transactions across multiple touchpoints empower customers by making their shopping experiences hassle-free, which, in turn, strengthens their likelihood to share positive experiences with others. In this study, TI proved to be instrumental in enhancing customer experiences by providing a seamless transactional flow, reflecting a cohesive

brand presence across channels. For supermarkets in particular, where consumers expect quick and efficient service, the ability to move fluidly between channels whether through unified payment systems, synchronized loyalty programs, or in-store pickups for online orders builds trust and motivates customers to spread positive WOM.

Relational integration (RI) also plays a vital role, as the study found its impact on WOM to be notable. Consistent with the work of Gasparin et al., (2022), who identified personalized and cohesive customer relationships across channels as essential for building customer loyalty, relational integration emerged as a key driver of positive WOM. Through relational integration, retailers can create a customer-centered experience that resonates personally with each consumer, reinforcing brand loyalty. Liu et al., (2024) similarly emphasized the value of integrated customer relationship management across channels, showing that when customers feel understood and valued, they are more likely to engage in WOM. Relational integration contributes to positive WOM by fostering trust and long-term engagement, as customers perceive personalized interactions as signs of a brand's attentiveness to their needs. This type of integration becomes especially relevant in the supermarket sector, where loyalty and customer relationships can significantly impact repeat business. When consumers feel that a brand genuinely values them across all touchpoints, they are more inclined to advocate for it.

Implications of the Study

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes significantly to the existing literature on omnichannel integration by exploring how the three key elements—informational, transactional, and relational integration differently influence customer behaviors, especially positive WOM. While previous studies have acknowledged the general importance of omnichannel strategies, this research provides deeper insight into how each type of integration plays a unique role in shaping customer experiences and advocacy. The findings suggest that informational integration builds trust and reduces uncertainty, transactional integration enhances convenience and flexibility, and relational integration strengthens emotional connections, which collectively drive WOM. These results extend the existing knowledge of omnichannel integration by proposing a more nuanced approach that emphasizes not only the operational aspects of omnichannel strategies but also the creation of personalized, seamless experiences that cater to the evolving needs of modern consumers. Additionally, this study offers valuable contributions to Flow Theory by demonstrating how a smooth and integrated customer experience across multiple channels can heighten consumer engagement. When customers feel that their interactions with a brand are easy, enjoyable, and personalized, they are more likely to engage in positive WOM, reinforcing the flow experience. The research also opens up new avenues for future investigations into omnichannel integration, particularly in emerging markets like Sri Lanka, where consumer behaviors

and retail infrastructures are undergoing rapid changes. Future studies could expand on these findings by examining the long-term effects of omnichannel integration on brand loyalty, WOM, and customer retention across various industries. Furthermore, exploring the role of technology in facilitating effective omnichannel strategies, especially in sectors beyond retail, would provide further insights into how digital innovations are reshaping consumer engagement and brand loyalty in the omnichannel context.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study underscore the significant practical implications of omnichannel integration for supermarkets in Sri Lanka, particularly in the context of enhancing customer experiences and encouraging positive word-of-mouth (WOM). Retailers should prioritize informational integration, which involves providing consistent, accurate product information across both online and offline channels. This includes ensuring that details such as pricing, stock availability, and promotions are uniform, which reduces customer uncertainty and fosters trust. When customers experience seamless and reliable information across various touchpoints, it builds confidence in the brand, encouraging them to share their positive experiences with others, thereby amplifying WOM. Moreover, transactional integration is equally important, as it ensures that customers can move fluidly between online and in-store environments. By implementing features such as unified payment systems, integrated loyalty programs, and cross-channel services like the ability to order online and pick up in-store, retailers can significantly enhance the convenience of the shopping experience. This flexibility is crucial for modern consumers who value the ability to shop at their convenience, whether through digital platforms or physical stores. Providing these integrated transactional options can improve overall customer satisfaction, increase brand preference, and drive WOM, as consumers are more likely to advocate for brands that offer flexibility and ease in completing transactions. Finally, relational integration is critical for building lasting customer relationships and fostering advocacy. Personalized engagement, whether through tailored recommendations, targeted promotions, or consistent customer support across all channels, can help make customers feel valued at every stage of their shopping journey. Relational integration taps into consumers' desire for individualized experiences, which fosters loyalty and encourages them to share their positive experiences with others. In particular, in a highly competitive market like Sri Lanka, where brand loyalty can be challenging to cultivate, a strong focus on relational integration could serve as a differentiator, prompting customers to advocate for the brand. In conclusion, this study highlights that when omnichannel integration is thoughtfully implemented by aligning informational, transactional, and relational elements—Sri Lankan supermarkets can enhance customer satisfaction, meet rising consumer expectations, and ultimately build a loyal customer base that actively promotes the brand through WOM.

Conclusion, Limitations & Future Research Directions

The findings of this study highlight the complex effects of omnichannel integration on positive word-of-mouth (WOM) in the supermarket sector, presenting a strategic framework for retailers in Colombo to improve customer loyalty and advocacy. The significant role of relational integration emphasizes the importance of developing personalized connections across both digital and physical channels to foster positive WOM. Moreover, the roles of informational and transactional integrations are vital, as they enhance clarity and convenience in customer interactions. Supermarkets that embrace a comprehensive omnichannel strategy are better positioned to promote lasting customer engagement. Retailers should recognize omnichannel integration as a fundamental element of brand experience management rather than just an operational tactic. By incorporating omnichannel practices into their customer relationship strategies, retailers can more effectively address consumer expectations, build trust, and enhance their market presence.

However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations and contextual factors that may affect the generalizability of the findings. This study focuses solely on the supermarket sector in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and the specific dynamics of this market, including consumer behaviors and retail infrastructure, may not be representative of other regions or sectors. Additionally, the use of convenience sampling may limit the diversity of the sample, potentially introducing bias. Future studies should consider these factors when attempting to apply the findings to different contexts.

This research also opens avenues for future investigations into the effects of omnichannel integration in various retail contexts, particularly in emerging markets where consumer behaviors and retail infrastructures are evolving rapidly. Future studies should adopt a mixed-methods approach, incorporating qualitative techniques to uncover the underlying reasons behind the findings. Additionally, examining generational impacts and the role of technology in shaping consumer perceptions and the long-term effects on brand loyalty and WOM would provide valuable insights. Furthermore, future research could explore cultural factors unique to Sri Lanka that may influence WOM behaviors, providing a deeper understanding of the local context and consumer interactions. This study also paves the way for future research on omnichannel effects across diverse retail settings, especially within emerging markets where consumer behaviors and retail infrastructure are rapidly evolving. Future research could investigate the impact of omnichannel integration in other industries, explore consumer perceptions of personalized experiences, and examine the long-term effects of such integration on brand loyalty and WOM. Additionally, research could focus on the role of technology in facilitating effective omnichannel strategies and its implications for enhancing customer engagement.

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