

Menelusuri Pengalaman Pelanggan Omnichannel Dan Peluang Peningkatan: Studi Kualitatif Di Kalangan Konsumen Muda AZKO

Exploring Omnichannel Customer Experience And Improvement Opportunities: A Qualitative Study Among Young Consumers Of AZKO

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Abstract

*The rapid adoption of omnichannel retail has transformed customer shopping behavior by integrating digital and physical touchpoints into a unified shopping journey. While previous studies have primarily employed quantitative approaches to examine the effects of omnichannel capabilities on customer outcomes, limited attention has been given to understanding customers' lived experiences across multiple touchpoints. This study explores the omnichannel experiences of young consumers at AZKO retail stores in Jakarta using a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 26 participants selected through purposive sampling and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The findings identified three major themes shaping omnichannel customer experience: **Inventory Visibility, Channel Integration, and Human Interaction**. These themes were further conceptualized into three proposed constructs: **Information Transparency, Cross-Channel Integration, and Service Support**, which together form a customer-centered conceptual model of omnichannel experience. The findings indicate that customers evaluate omnichannel retail holistically, emphasizing accurate inventory information, seamless transitions between online and offline channels, and knowledgeable frontline employees as complementary dimensions of a satisfying shopping experience. This study contributes to omnichannel retail literature by developing an empirically grounded conceptual framework that extends existing quantitative research and provides practical guidance for retailers seeking to improve omnichannel integration and customer experience.*

Keywords: Omnichannel retail; Customer experience; Thematic analysis; Information transparency; Cross-channel integration; Human interaction; Qualitative study.

Abstrak

Adopsi ritel *omnichannel* yang pesat telah mengubah perilaku belanja pelanggan dengan mengintegrasikan titik interaksi (*touchpoints*) digital dan fisik ke dalam satu perjalanan belanja yang terpadu. Meskipun studi-studi sebelumnya sebagian besar menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif untuk mengkaji dampak kapabilitas *omnichannel* terhadap hasil yang dirasakan pelanggan, perhatian yang diberikan untuk memahami pengalaman nyata pelanggan di berbagai titik interaksi tersebut masih terbatas. Studi ini mengeksplorasi pengalaman *omnichannel* konsumen muda di gerai ritel AZKO di Jakarta dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan 26 partisipan yang dipilih menggunakan teknik *purposive sampling* dan dianalisis menggunakan metode analisis tematik Braun dan Clarke. Temuan studi mengidentifikasi tiga tema utama yang membentuk pengalaman pelanggan dalam *omnichannel*: Visibilitas Inventaris, Integrasi Saluran, dan Interaksi Manusia. Tema-tema ini kemudian dikonseptualisasikan menjadi tiga konstruk usulan: Transparansi Informasi, Integrasi Lintas Saluran, dan Dukungan Layanan; ketiganya bersama-sama membentuk model konseptual pengalaman *omnichannel* yang berpusat pada pelanggan. Hasil studi menunjukkan bahwa pelanggan mengevaluasi ritel *omnichannel* secara holistik, dengan menekankan pentingnya informasi inventaris yang akurat, transisi yang mulus antara saluran *online* dan *offline*, serta karyawan garda depan yang berpengetahuan luas sebagai dimensi pelengkap bagi pengalaman belanja yang memuaskan. Studi ini berkontribusi pada literatur ritel *omnichannel* dengan mengembangkan kerangka kerja konseptual berbasis empiris yang memperluas

cakupan penelitian kuantitatif yang sudah ada, serta memberikan panduan praktis bagi peritel yang ingin meningkatkan integrasi *omnichannel* dan pengalaman pelanggan.

Kata kunci: Ritel *omnichannel*; Pengalaman pelanggan; Analisis tematik; Transparansi informasi; Integrasi lintas saluran; Interaksi manusia; Studi kualitatif.

1. Introduction

Digital technologies have fundamentally reshaped the retail landscape by changing how consumers search for products, make purchasing decisions, and interact with brands (Asmare & Zewdie, 2022; Faria & Carvalho, 2025). Their expectations for speed, convenience, and channel consistency are generally higher than). In Indonesia, retailers are increasingly integrating physical stores with digital platforms to provide a more connected shopping experience. This transformation has encouraged many retailers to adopt an omnichannel strategy that allows customers to move across multiple channels during a single shopping journey (Balbín & Samuel, 2024; Li et al., 2025). Rather than treating online and offline channels separately, retailers now seek to deliver a consistent experience across websites, mobile applications, physical stores, and customer service. As competition intensifies, delivering a seamless omnichannel experience has become an important source of competitive advantage (Li et al., 2025; Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2021).

Young consumers, particularly Generation Z and Millennials, have become the primary users of omnichannel retail because they are highly familiar with digital technology and frequently combine online and offline channels before making purchase decisions (Akturk & Ketzenberg, 2022). Instead of relying on a single shopping channel, they often search for product information through websites or mobile applications, check product availability before visiting stores, compare prices online, seek advice from store employees, and expect flexible delivery and after-sales services (Faria & Carvalho, 2025; Zhang et al., 2024). Their expectations for speed, convenience, and channel consistency are generally higher than those of previous generations. Consequently, understanding the experiences of young consumers is important for retailers seeking to improve omnichannel service quality and maintain customer loyalty (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Bolton et al., 2018).

The concept of omnichannel retail extends beyond simply offering both online and offline shopping channels. A true omnichannel strategy integrates all customer touchpoints into a unified shopping journey where information, services, and transactions are connected across channels (Li et al., 2025). Customers expect product information, inventory availability, pricing, loyalty programs, and after-sales services to remain consistent regardless of the channel they use (Zhang et al., 2024). Therefore, customer experience is increasingly determined not only by the quality of individual channels but also by how smoothly customers can transition between them throughout the entire purchasing process (Akturk & Ketzenberg, 2022; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2015).

Previous studies have contributed significantly to understanding omnichannel retail by examining its relationship with customer satisfaction, purchase intention, trust, and loyalty (Asmare & Zewdie (2022). However, most studies have adopted quantitative survey methods that measure predefined variables using structured questionnaires. Although these studies provide valuable empirical evidence, they often offer limited insight into how customers actually experience omnichannel interactions across different stages of their shopping journey. As customer experiences develop dynamically across multiple touchpoints, qualitative exploration

can reveal perspectives that are difficult to capture through standardized survey instruments (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Zhang et al., 2024).

In addition, relatively few studies have explored omnichannel retail from an inductive perspective that allows new themes to emerge directly from customers' lived experiences (Aithal et al., 2023; Asmare & Zewdie, 2022; Faria & Carvalho, 2025). Experiences such as checking inventory before visiting a store, switching between digital and physical channels, interacting with sales staff, managing deliveries, using loyalty programs, or handling product returns may reveal hidden challenges and unmet expectations that are not fully represented in existing conceptual models (Aithal et al., 2023; Akturk & Ketzenberg, 2022). Identifying these emergent themes may provide richer insights into the factors that shape omnichannel customer experience and help retailers identify practical opportunities for improvement.

To address this gap, this study explores the omnichannel experiences of young consumers who have interacted with multiple customer touchpoints at AZKO stores in Jakarta. AZKO was selected as the research setting because it has implemented a mature omnichannel retail ecosystem that integrates digital and physical shopping channels, including its website, mobile application, physical stores, click-and-collect services, home delivery, loyalty programs, and after-sales support within a unified customer journey (<https://azko.id>). This comprehensive omnichannel capability has also been recognized as one of the company's strategic priorities in enhancing customer experience and branding (Yuwono et al., 2026) making AZKO an appropriate case for examining how customers navigate and evaluate integrated retail touchpoints.

The study aims to uncover the themes that shape omnichannel customer experience and to develop a conceptual model that highlights key opportunities for improving channel integration from the customer perspective. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: How do young consumers experience omnichannel retail across multiple customer touchpoints, and what themes emerge to improve omnichannel integration?

Given the exploratory nature of this study, a qualitative approach is considered appropriate because it enables researchers to understand how customers interpret and experience omnichannel interactions across different stages of the customer journey (Creswell, 2024). Rather than measuring predefined constructs, qualitative inquiry allows participants to describe their experiences in their own words, making it possible to identify unexpected issues, hidden pain points, and emerging patterns that may not be captured through structured surveys. Thematic analysis further supports this objective by systematically organizing participants' narratives into meaningful themes that can inform the development of a customer-centered conceptual model.

2. Literature Review

In this study, omnichannel retail refers to the integration of multiple shopping channels into a unified system that enables customers to interact with retailers seamlessly across digital and physical environments (Li et al., 2025). Unlike multichannel retailing, which simply offers several independent channels, omnichannel retail emphasizes channel integration so that customers can move effortlessly between websites, mobile applications, physical stores, and customer service during a single shopping journey (Faria & Carvalho, 2025). This integrated

approach has become increasingly important because it improves customer convenience while creating opportunities for retailers to strengthen customer engagement, operational efficiency, and long-term competitiveness (Faria & Carvalho, 2025). As consumers increasingly expect flexibility in how they search, purchase, and receive products, omnichannel capability has evolved into a strategic resource for retail businesses rather than merely a technological innovation (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013; Verhoef et al., 2015; Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014; Zhang et al., 2024).

Customer experience has become a central concept in retail and marketing because it reflects customers' overall perceptions resulting from every interaction with a company throughout the purchasing process (Faria & Carvalho, 2025). Rather than evaluating a single transaction, customer experience encompasses cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social responses that develop before, during, and after a purchase (Akturk & Ketzenberg, 2022). Lemon and Verhoef (2016) and further Zhang et al. (2024) argue that customer experience is created through a series of interconnected touchpoints across the customer journey, making consistency between these interactions essential for achieving customer satisfaction and loyalty. Consequently, understanding customer experience has become increasingly important for retailers seeking to differentiate themselves in highly competitive markets.

Within an omnichannel environment, the customer journey consists of a sequence of touchpoints that collectively shape the overall shopping experience. These touchpoints generally span three interconnected stages: pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase (Asmare & Zewdie (2022; Zhang et al., 2024). During the pre-purchase stage, customers may search for product information, compare alternatives, or check inventory through websites and mobile applications. The purchase stage includes interactions in physical stores or online platforms, consultation with sales staff, payment, and order fulfillment (Faria & Carvalho, 2025). After the purchase, customers continue interacting with retailers through delivery services, product returns, exchanges, customer support, and loyalty programs (Akturk & Ketzenberg, 2022). Because customers frequently move across these touchpoints, the quality of omnichannel integration depends not only on the performance of each individual channel but also on the continuity of the entire customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Zhang et al., 2024).

Although omnichannel retail has attracted growing academic attention, previous studies have primarily focused on examining the relationships between omnichannel capabilities and outcomes such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, purchase intention, trust, and repurchase behavior (Asmare & Zewdie 2022; Li et al., 2025). Most of these studies have adopted quantitative survey methods using predefined constructs and hypothesis testing. While these approaches provide important empirical evidence, they often capture customers' evaluations at a single point in time and may overlook the complexity of customer experiences as they move across multiple retail **channels**. Consequently, relatively limited attention has been given to understanding how customers actually experience channel integration throughout their shopping journey.

Furthermore, little is known about the hidden challenges that customers encounter when navigating multiple channels, including inconsistencies in product information, difficulties during channel transitions, after-sales service issues, and unmet expectations across different touchpoints. These experiences may reveal important improvement opportunities that are difficult to identify through structured

questionnaires alone. Therefore, a qualitative approach using thematic analysis offers the potential to uncover emergent themes grounded in customers' lived experiences and to develop a richer conceptual understanding of omnichannel integration from the customer perspective. Such findings may contribute to both omnichannel retail theory and practical strategies for improving customer experience.

3. Method

The research design, of this study based on employed a qualitative case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how young consumers experience omnichannel retail across multiple customer touchpoints. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because the research aimed to explore participants' lived experiences and identify emergent themes rather than test predefined hypotheses (Creswell, 2024). This approach also allows researchers to capture rich contextual information and develop a conceptual understanding of omnichannel integration from the customer perspective (Creswell, 2024).

In regard to research setting, the study was conducted using AZKO retail stores in Jakarta as the research setting. AZKO was selected because it has implemented a relatively mature omnichannel ecosystem that integrates several customer channels into a single shopping experience. Customers can search for products through the website or mobile application, check product availability before visiting a store, purchase products online or in physical stores, use click-and-collect services, receive home delivery, access loyalty programs, and obtain after-sales services such as product returns or exchanges. These integrated touchpoints provide an appropriate context for exploring customer experiences throughout the omnichannel journey.

In the sampling process, Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that all informants possessed relevant omnichannel shopping experience. Eligible participants were between 18 and 40 years old, representing Generation Z and younger Millennials who are generally more familiar with digital technologies and frequently combine online and offline shopping channels. In addition, participants were required to have interacted with at least three omnichannel touchpoints, such as searching for products through the website before purchasing in a physical store, using the mobile application followed by home delivery, or purchasing in-store and subsequently requesting a product return or exchange. Approximately 25 participants were interviewed, with recruitment continuing until data saturation was achieved, indicated by the absence of substantially new themes emerging from subsequent interviews (Chitac, 2022).

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted between 45 and 60 minutes for each participant. The interview protocol follow Roulston and Halpin (2022), consisted of open-ended questions designed to encourage participants to describe their experiences across the entire omnichannel journey. Key questions included: *How do you usually search for products before making a purchase?*; *Why do you choose to use the website or mobile application?*; *What was your experience when visiting the physical store?*; *How did you experience moving between online and offline channels?*; *Which part of your shopping experience was the most satisfying?*; *What difficulties or disappointments did you encounter?*; and *What improvements would you expect from AZKO's omnichannel services?* Follow-up questions were used whenever necessary to obtain richer explanations and clarify participants' responses.

Data Analysis done by thematic analysis following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis began with repeated reading of the interview transcripts to achieve familiarity with the data, followed by the generation of initial codes representing meaningful units of information. Similar codes were then grouped into potential themes, which were reviewed, refined, and clearly defined to ensure that they accurately reflected participants' experiences. The final themes were interpreted to explain how young consumers experienced omnichannel retail across multiple customer touchpoints and to inform the development of a conceptual model highlighting opportunities for improving omnichannel integration (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, this study followed the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was strengthened through iterative discussions among the researchers during coding and theme development, as well as data source triangulation. The triangulation involved comparing participants' interview accounts with observations of AZKO's omnichannel services, including its website, mobile application, physical stores, loyalty program, and publicly available service information. Transferability was facilitated by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participant characteristics, and data collection procedures, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar retail settings (Chitac, 2022).

4. Result

4.1 Informants

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics and omnichannel shopping journeys of the 26 participants included in this study. The informants represented a balanced distribution of gender, comprising 13 females and 13 males, with ages ranging from 18 to 40 years. Consistent with the purposive sampling criteria, most participants belonged to Generation Z and younger Millennials, demographic groups recognized as active users of digital technologies and frequent adopters of omnichannel retail services. The participants also represented diverse occupational backgrounds, including university students, private-sector employees, entrepreneurs, healthcare professionals, engineers, consultants, financial analysts, and business owners. This diversity provided a broad range of perspectives regarding omnichannel shopping experiences while ensuring that the findings were not limited to a single occupational segment.

Table 1. Characteristics of Informants and Omnichannel Journey

ID	Gender	Age	Occupation	Omnichannel Journey (Touchpoints Experienced)
P1	Female	19	University student	Website → Store → Delivery
P2	Male	22	University student	Application → Store → Loyalty
P3	Female	21	Private employee	Website → Store → Return
P4	Male	24	Entrepreneur	Website → Store → Delivery → Loyalty
P5	Female	27	Marketing staff	Application → Store → Delivery
P6	Male	29	Engineer	Website → Store → Click & Collect
P7	Female	23	Graphic designer	Website → Store → Return

ID	Gender	Age	Occupation	Omnichannel Journey (Touchpoints Experienced)
P8	Female	25	Accountant	Application → Delivery → Loyalty
P9	Male	31	Civil servant	Website → Store → Delivery
P10	Female	34	Lecturer	Website → Store → Loyalty
P11	Male	26	Sales executive	Application → Store → Delivery
P12	Female	20	University student	Website → Store → Click & Collect
P13	Male	28	IT specialist	Website → Application → Store → Delivery
P14	Female	30	Safety officer	Store → Delivery → Return
P15	Male	35	Business owner	Website → Store → Loyalty
P16	Female	24	Nurse	Application → Store → Delivery
P17	Male	32	Financial analyst	Website → Store → Return
P18	Female	33	Pharmacist	Website → Delivery → Loyalty
P19	Male	27	Digital marketer	Application → Store → Click & Collect
P20	Female	18	University student	Website → Store → Delivery
P21	Male	36	Architect	Website → Store → Loyalty → Return
P22	Female	37	Bank officer	Application → Store → Delivery
P23	Male	39	Consultant	Website → Store → Delivery → Loyalty
P24	Female	40	Business owner	Website → Application → Store
P25	Male	30	Operations supervisor	Application → Store → Return
P26	Female	28	Interior designer	Website → Store → Delivery → Loyalty

The participants experienced various combinations of omnichannel customer journeys, reflecting the integrated retail ecosystem implemented by AZKO. The majority of informants interacted with multiple touchpoints, typically beginning with product searches through the website or mobile application before visiting physical stores, followed by additional services such as home delivery, click-and-collect, loyalty program utilization, or product return and exchange. Several participants reported more complex shopping journeys involving four or more interconnected touchpoints, demonstrating extensive engagement across online and offline channels. The variation in omnichannel pathways provided rich empirical evidence for exploring customer experiences throughout the purchasing process and supported the identification of recurring themes during thematic analysis until data saturation was achieved.

4.2 Emerging Themes of Omnichannel Customer Experience

The thematic analysis generated three major themes that explain how young consumers experience omnichannel retail at AZKO. These themes were developed through an iterative coding process following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. Initial codes extracted from participants' interview transcripts were first grouped into conceptually related categories before being synthesized into higher-order themes. As presented in Table 5, the analysis identified three interconnected themes: Inventory Visibility, Channel Integration, and Human

Interaction. Collectively, these themes describe the critical dimensions that shape customers' omnichannel shopping experiences throughout the pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages.

The three themes demonstrate that omnichannel customer experience extends beyond the availability of multiple shopping channels. Instead, participants consistently emphasized the importance of reliable information, seamless movement between digital and physical channels, and meaningful interactions with frontline employees. These findings indicate that customers evaluate omnichannel quality holistically rather than assessing each touchpoint independently. Figure 1 summarizes the proposed conceptual model developed from the thematic analysis, illustrating how the three themes contribute to an enhanced omnichannel customer experience through the proposed constructs of Information Transparency, Cross-Channel Integration, and Service Support.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Inventory Visibility

Inventory Visibility emerged as the first and one of the most frequently discussed themes during the interviews. Participants consistently described product availability information as the starting point of their shopping journey. Before visiting a physical store, most participants searched for products through the website or mobile application to confirm stock availability and reduce unnecessary travel. As illustrated in Table 2, respondents expressed confidence when digital inventory information accurately reflected actual stock conditions in the store. One participant explained, *"Before going to the store, I always checked the stock on the website first. Most of the time it matched, so I didn't waste my trip"* (P1), while another reported that synchronized inventory information made shopping considerably easier (P2).

Table 2. Representative Quotes for Theme 1: Inventory Visibility

Subtheme	Representative Codes	Representative Quote	Participants
Accurate stock information	Stock availability, inventory confidence	<i>"Before going to the store, I always checked the stock on the website first. Most of the time it matched, so I didn't waste my trip."</i>	P1, P9, P20
		<i>"The app showed the product was available, and when I arrived it was still there. That made shopping much easier."</i>	P2, P13
Inconsistent inventory information	Stock mismatch, disappointment	<i>"A few times the website said the item was available, but when I got to the store the staff couldn't find it. That was quite frustrating."</i>	P3, P17
Product search convenience	Easy product discovery	<i>"Usually I search online first because it's much faster than walking around the store looking for the product."</i>	P5, P24
Real-time inventory expectation	Inventory synchronization	<i>"I hope the stock information can be updated in real time because customers rely on it before deciding to visit the store."</i>	P6, P21

Despite these positive experiences, several participants also reported inconsistencies between online inventory information and actual stock availability. Stock mismatches created disappointment and reduced trust in the retailer's digital platform, particularly when customers had already invested time traveling to the store. Participants therefore expected inventory information to be updated in real time and synchronized across all customer touchpoints. Easy product discovery

through digital platforms was also perceived as an important benefit because it reduced search effort before store visits. Overall, Inventory Visibility reflects customers' expectation that accurate and transparent product information should support informed purchasing decisions throughout the omnichannel journey.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Channel Integration

The second theme, Channel Integration, reflects customers' expectations that all shopping channels operate as one interconnected retail system rather than independent platforms. Participants generally appreciated the ability to begin their shopping journey through digital channels and seamlessly continue it in physical stores. Several respondents described searching for products online before completing purchases in-store without experiencing major disruptions. Click-and-collect services were particularly valued because they minimized waiting time while maintaining shopping flexibility.

Table 3. Representative Quotes for Theme 2: Channel Integration

Subtheme	Representative Codes	Representative Quote	Participants
Seamless transition	Online-to-offline continuity	<i>"I searched through the app, then went straight to the store. Everything felt connected, so the shopping process was smooth."</i>	P4, P19
Click-and-collect convenience	Flexible fulfilment	<i>"Click and collect saved a lot of time. I just picked it up without having to search for the product again."</i>	P6, P12
Delivery experience	Reliable delivery	<i>"The delivery was quite fast, and I could easily track my order from the application."</i>	P11, P22
Return process	Return flexibility	<i>"The return process wasn't difficult, but I still had to explain everything again even though the purchase history was already in the app."</i>	P7, P14, P25
Loyalty integration	Cross-channel benefits	<i>"It would be better if promotions and loyalty points were always the same whether I shop online or in the store."</i>	P10, P15, P26

Participants also emphasized the importance of reliable delivery services and consistent after-sales experiences. Although home delivery generally met customer expectations, several respondents highlighted opportunities for improving return processes. In particular, customers expected purchase histories stored in digital applications to be automatically accessible during product returns, thereby eliminating the need to repeatedly explain transaction details. Similarly, participants expected loyalty programs, promotional offers, and reward points to remain fully integrated regardless of whether purchases were completed online or offline. These

findings indicate that customers perceive omnichannel quality not merely through individual channel performance but through the continuity of interactions across the entire customer journey.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Human Interaction

Although digital technologies played a central role throughout the shopping journey, Human Interaction emerged as an equally important determinant of omnichannel experience. Participants consistently described store employees as valuable sources of reassurance, personalized consultation, and product expertise that complemented digital information available through websites and mobile applications. Several respondents indicated that staff explanations were often clearer and more practical than online product descriptions, particularly for products requiring technical knowledge or comparison among alternatives.

Table 4. Representative Quotes for Theme 3: Human Interaction

Subtheme	Representative Codes	Representative Quote	Participants
Staff knowledge	Product expertise	<i>"The staff explained the product very clearly, even better than what I read on the website."</i>	P16, P23
Helpful assistance	Responsive service	<i>"When I couldn't find the item, the staff immediately checked the system and suggested another branch."</i>	P18, P24
Personalized consultation	Purchase support	<i>"I already had information from the app, but I still wanted to ask the staff because they gave practical recommendations."</i>	P5, P10
Service inconsistency	Uneven service quality	<i>"Some staff were very helpful, but others seemed unfamiliar with the products shown in the application."</i>	P3, P17
Human reassurance	Trust building	<i>"Even though I searched online first, I still felt more confident after talking directly with the staff before buying."</i>	P21, P26

Furthermore, participants appreciated frontline employees who actively searched inventory systems, recommended alternative branches, or provided personalized purchase recommendations. These interactions strengthened customer confidence before making purchasing decisions. Nevertheless, several participants also reported inconsistencies in employee knowledge regarding products displayed on digital platforms, suggesting that staff capability was not always aligned with omnichannel service expectations. Overall, the findings indicate that effective omnichannel retailing requires not only technological integration but also well-trained employees capable of connecting digital information with personalized customer service.

4.2.4 Development of the Proposed Conceptual Model

Based on the thematic analysis, Table 5 summarizes how initial interview codes were progressively synthesized into conceptual categories and higher-order themes. Inventory-related codes converged into the theme Inventory Visibility, which represents customers' need for transparent and reliable product information and forms the proposed construct of Information Transparency. Similarly, codes describing seamless transitions between digital and physical channels were integrated into the theme Channel Integration, leading to the proposed construct Cross-Channel Integration. Finally, customer narratives regarding staff assistance, consultation, and product expertise formed the theme Human Interaction, which is represented conceptually as Service Support.

Table 5. Development of Themes and Proposed Conceptual Constructs

Initial Codes	Categories	Theme	Interpretation	Proposed Construct
Accurate stock	Inventory accuracy	Inventory Visibility	Customers value reliable product information before visiting the store.	Information Transparency
Click & Collect	Seamless transition	Channel Integration	Customers expect continuity across online and offline channels.	Cross-Channel Integration
Helpful staff	Product consultation	Human Interaction	Human assistance complements digital interactions and increases purchase confidence.	Service Support

Figure 1 integrates these three constructs into a proposed conceptual model of omnichannel customer experience. The model suggests that Information Transparency, Cross-Channel Integration, and Service Support jointly shape customers' perceptions of an effective omnichannel retail environment. Rather than functioning independently, these constructs reinforce one another throughout the customer journey, highlighting the multidimensional nature of omnichannel experience.

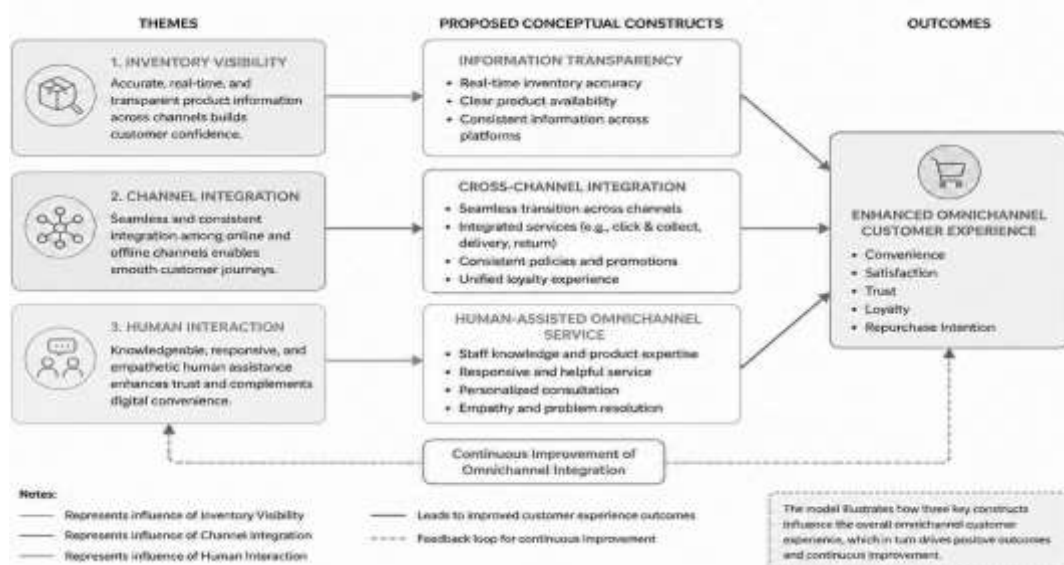


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model for omnichannel experience

Overall, the thematic findings indicate that omnichannel customer experience is a multidimensional phenomenon emerging from the interaction between digital information quality, operational channel integration, and human service support. This finding aligns with quantitative researches on channel integration and human interaction (Balbín & Samuel, 2024; Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2021). Nevertheless, these empirically derived themes not only explain how young consumers navigate omnichannel retail environments but also provide the conceptual basis for interpreting the findings in relation to existing omnichannel retail theories and prior empirical studies.

5. Discussion

The qualitative findings extend existing omnichannel literature by demonstrating that young consumers evaluate omnichannel retail as an integrated experience spanning digital technologies, operational processes, and interpersonal interactions. While previous research has emphasized technological integration as the defining characteristic of omnichannel retail (Asmare & Zewdie, 2022; Akturk & Ketzenberg, 2022; Balbín & Samuel, 2024) the present study reveals that customers simultaneously evaluate information quality, channel continuity, and human service. These dimensions emerged inductively from participants' lived experiences, providing a richer understanding of omnichannel customer experience than predefined survey constructs typically capture.

The prominence of **Inventory Visibility** highlights the strategic importance of information transparency during the pre-purchase stage. Participants consistently relied on websites and mobile applications to verify product availability before visiting physical stores. Accurate inventory information reduced uncertainty, increased shopping efficiency, and strengthened customer confidence, whereas stock inconsistencies generated frustration and diminished trust. These findings reinforce the argument of Lemon and Verhoef (2016), and Zhang et al. (2024) that customer experience begins well before the purchase itself and is shaped by every interaction across the customer journey.

From a managerial perspective, real-time inventory synchronization should therefore be regarded as a core capability of omnichannel retail rather than merely a technological feature. The second theme, **Channel Integration**, demonstrates that customers expect continuity across all retail touchpoints. Participants viewed services such as click-and-collect, integrated delivery tracking, unified loyalty programs, and simplified return procedures as evidence of successful omnichannel implementation. Conversely, fragmented processes requiring customers to repeat transaction information during product returns indicated incomplete integration between online and offline systems. These findings support previous conceptualizations of omnichannel retail as the seamless coordination of multiple customer touchpoints rather than the simple coexistence of several shopping channels (Faria & Carvalho, 2025; Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014; Verhoef et al., 2015). The findings also suggest that operational integration plays an equally important role as digital platform quality in shaping customer perceptions.

This study provide noteworthy finding in the emergence of **Human Interaction** as a major theme alongside technological integration. Although participants were digitally literate and frequently initiated their shopping journeys online, they continued to value interactions with knowledgeable frontline employees

before making final purchasing decisions. Personalized consultation, practical recommendations, and reassurance provided by store staff complemented rather than replaced digital information. This finding extends existing omnichannel literature by demonstrating that digitalization does not eliminate the need for human service; instead, frontline employees become increasingly important as advisors who translate digital information into personalized purchasing confidence. Consequently, successful omnichannel strategies should balance investments in technological infrastructure with continuous employee training to ensure consistent service quality across channels.

The proposed conceptual model contributes to omnichannel research by identifying three interrelated constructs grounded directly in continuum customer experiences: **Information Transparency**, **Cross-Channel Integration**, and **Service Support**. Unlike many previous studies that examined customer satisfaction or loyalty using predetermined variables, the present model was developed inductively through thematic analysis. The model therefore offers a customer-centered perspective on omnichannel retail by emphasizing how reliable information, integrated customer journeys, and supportive human interactions jointly create a seamless shopping experience. These findings provide a theoretical foundation for future quantitative research to validate the proposed constructs and examine their relationships with customer satisfaction, loyalty, trust, and repurchase intention across broader retail contexts.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the omnichannel experiences of young consumers at AZKO using a qualitative case study approach and thematic analysis. Three interrelated themes emerged from the findings: Inventory Visibility, Channel Integration, and Human Interaction, which were subsequently conceptualized as Information Transparency, Cross-Channel Integration, and Service Support. Combined, these constructs demonstrate that omnichannel customer experience extends beyond the availability of multiple shopping channels and is shaped by the integration of accurate information, seamless operational processes, and personalized human assistance throughout the customer journey. By developing an empirically grounded conceptual model, this study contributes to the omnichannel retail literature by providing a customer-centered perspective that complements the predominantly quantitative evidence reported in previous studies.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that retailers should prioritize real-time inventory synchronization, strengthen integration across digital and physical touchpoints, and continuously invest in frontline employee capabilities to deliver a consistent omnichannel experience. More than viewing digital technologies and human service as separate capabilities, organizations should integrate both into a unified customer experience strategy. The proposed conceptual model offers a useful foundation for retail managers seeking to identify service improvement priorities while also providing researchers with theoretically grounded constructs that can be operationalized and validated in future quantitative studies.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, this study was conducted in a single retail organization, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other retail sectors or geographical contexts. Second, the participants were limited to young consumers, and therefore the experiences of

older customer segments may differ. Finally, the qualitative design was intended to generate conceptual insights rather than establish causal relationships among the identified constructs. Future research may quantitatively validate the proposed model using larger and more diverse samples, examine the relationships between information transparency, cross-channel integration, and service support and key outcomes such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, trust, and repurchase intention, and compare omnichannel experiences across different retail industries and cultural settings to enhance the generalizability of the proposed framework.

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