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EVALUATING THE EXPERIENCE TOUCHPOINTS OF THE RETAIL CUSTOMER JOURNEY

As customers now frequently shop across channels, improving the customer experience through the seamless integration of the non-technology and the technology touchpoints have become essential to the customer journey (Cuomo *et al.,* 2020) However, there is limited research identifying how different touchpoints through the different stages of the customer journey contribute to the overall experience and which touchpoints are of most importance (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). A framework identifying the touchpoints across both an offline and online retail customer journey identified eight key elements (Poorrezaei, *et al.,*2023). While seven elements co responded to the '7Ps' of the marketing mix, namely product, price, place, promotion, process, physical evidence and place, an eight element of personal connection was also revealed as being integral to enhancement of customer experience. The importance of personalization in driving customer experience is known; studies suggest that consumers seek personalized interactions, which make them feel valued and can positively affect customer experience, brand engagement and positive word of mouth (Bilgihan *et al.,* 2016). What is not known is the importance of the individual eight touchpoints in generating customer experience and how this importance will vary between online and offline retail settings. Therefore the aim of this study is to evaluate the experience touchpoints of the online and offline retail customer journey

A self-complete online survey will be used. 250 participants of mixed gender, aged between 18-70 who shop both online and in stores will be recruited and asked to complete questions around their demographics, shopping habits and preferences, and use of retail platforms. A series of questions using Likert scales will be created based on the' 8Ps' framework of customer experience (Poorrezaei *et al,* 2023). Results will be analysed using SEM. This is an early-stage study building on the recently published paper, which proposed a framework to improve retail customer experience (Poorrezaei *et al*., 2023). It is anticipated that initial findings will be available to present to conference.

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