

# *Influence of Select Antecedents on Customers' Experience in Omni-Channel Retail: A Meta-Analysis*

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*Omni-channel is the urgent need of the time in order to provide seamless customer experience and satisfaction to customers from every channel of the service industry. Accordingly, this paper aims to conduct a meta-analysis and calculate the effective size of the most influential antecedents that consist of: (i) personalization, (ii) channel service configuration, and (iii) integrated interactions in omni-channel customer experience. Data have been collected from 16 studies (N= 10,518) which have been processed through meta-essential software to conduct a meta-analysis. The results summarized the combined effect size and indicated that all the selected antecedents have a moderate positive effect on customer experience in relatively less explored omni-channel retail. Meta regression is also used to analyze the influence of these antecedents in the presence of a moderator, i.e. the country classification.*

*Keywords: Omni-channel retail – Meta-analysis – Customer experience – Personalization, Channel service configuration – Integrated interactions*

## **1. Introduction**

The concept of omni-channel retailing has acquired great popularity in recent years. Despite the fact that a lot of theoretical research emphasizes the importance of omni-channel retailing, practical evidence is still lacking (Ana Grecu, 2016). The omni-

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channel idea blends online and offline channels to provide a uniform customer experience regardless of the medium (Picot-Coupey *et al.* 2016). In most of the research models, customer experience is viewed as a mediator between a set of antecedents and outcomes. Customers' experience antecedents are investigated to determine their impact on the customers' experience, and, the outcomes are investigated to find out how they influence consumers' repurchase intention, word-of-mouth, and satisfaction (Pavlou, 2003).

Omni-channel is much needed method in the current consumption scenario in order to provide seamless experience to customers from every channel, whereas in mutli-channel, customers used to buy from various channels, but they could not utilize all of them at the same time. Indian retail brands that have started the journey to omni-channel retail are Shoppers Stop, Raymond, Van Heusen, Pepperfry, Adidas, Croma, Lifestyle, Flipkart, Woodland and many others (Verma, 2018). The study of multiple channel retailing research emphasizes the notion of integrating the many channels that operate inside a company (Neslin *et al.* 2006).

The main objective of this review paper is to understand the determinants of customers' experience and association between them through meta-analysis in the omni-channel world. This paper is presented in four sections.

Section 1. The introduction.

Section 2. The theoretical background.

Section 3. The research methodology which includes inclusion/exclusion criteria, results of the association between the variables and moderator analysis.

Section 4. The conclusion and future research directions.

## **Review of Literature**

### ***Customer Experience***

It is described as an internal and personal reaction of a consumer to any type of ongoing engagement with a company (Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Gentile *et al.* 2007; Brakus *et al.* 2009). Every customer wants a seamless experience across all the channels as it plays a major role in the decision making of the buying journey. According to previous literature,

there are several factors which influence customer experience, like utilitarian motivation, hedonic motivation, channel integration, customer empowerment, brand familiarity, etc., but in this paper we considered only those antecedents which have been studied frequently, fulfilled the inclusion criteria and also played a major role in influencing customer experience.

### *Antecedents of Customer Experience*

Shopping motivations are basically two: (a) Utilitarian, and (b) Hedonic. The utilitarian aspect is task-oriented, focused and rational decision of a consumer, whereas hedonic inclination is tied to the joy of buying (Gehrt & Carter, 1992). In this paper, we have focused on the personalization aspect – a dimension of utilitarian motivation. It means to provide personalized content to the customers on the basis of information given by them. The gathering and evaluation of consumers' personal choices by retailers, and, the use of appropriate channels to provide identified goods or services that consumers may require, are referred to as personalized suggestions (Wang & Yu, 2021). As a result, providing consumers with the opportunity to filter material, favourite information, and content that is significant for them can lead to good customer delight (Rose *et al.* 2012).

Hedonic motivation is linked to the fun and satisfaction element of shopping, in which customers view shopping as an entertainment activity in which they go for the experience rather than to buy something, thus they are not obligated even to buy anything (Gehrt & Carter, 1992). In order to provide hedonic benefits online, retailers make websites more interactive and suggestive and make the online customer experience the joy of shopping. According to earlier literature, hedonic motivation lifts the emotions of customers in a positive way.

Channel integration refers to the potential of a business to generate a consistent buying experience across all channels (Soussa & Voss, 2006). It means, providing a seamless experience by integrating various channels through which a customer shops, so that customers may switch channels effortlessly throughout their interactions related to the business (Goersch, 2002; Seck, 2013). Corporate actions to establish close coordination across its numerous channels in order to achieve synced operations are referred to as channel integration (Hamouda, 2019; Saghiri *et al.* 2017). This comprises channel

service configuration and integrated interactions in which the first one stands for providing customers with a wide variety and flexible mix of numerous online and physical channels and the second one means stability and steadiness of both processes and content qualities across numerous channels provided by retailers (Sousa & Voss, 2006).

Customer empowerment is explained as the consumers' ability to control their choices (Wathieu *et al.*, 2002). According to Broniarczyk and Griffin (2014), extensive information and the choice of freedom are the two key factors which influence customer empowerment. Retailers give customers the freedom to choose what they need and want on their own terms (Kreps, 1979). Empowering the customer thus is beneficial to retailers as it helps them in engaging more customers by providing seamless experience across channels (Muthukrishnan & Kardes 2001).

Brand familiarity is one of the antecedents of customer experience. According to Hoch and Deighton (1989), Dahlén and Lange (2004), brand familiarity refers to the time taken by the customers to process and store the information with minimal efforts about a brand. The more familiar a customer is with the brand, the more likely s/he will purchase goods of those brands as compared to unfamiliar brands. Hence a steady brand image must be cultivated in a multiple channel environment to be endorsed and sourced continually by potential customers (Schoenbachler & Gordon, 2002).

Out of these antecedents, personalization, channel service configuration and integrated interactions have been chosen to further carry out the study as these variables have been extensively studied by the previous authors and adequate data is available for the meta-analysis. The definitions of variables included in the study are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Definition of Variables**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Source</i>
Customer Experience	Consumer's internal reaction to any type of ongoing engagement with the company	Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Gentile <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Brakus <i>et al.</i> , 2009;
Personalization	Providing the customers with individualized content as per their needs and likes	Adomavicius & Tuzhilin, 2005

Channel Service Configuration	Providing customers with a broad range and flexible mix of numerous online/offline channels	Sousa & Voss, 2006
Integrated Interactions	Stability and steadiness of both processes and content attributes via retailers' various channels	Sousa & Voss, 2006

**Personalization and Customer Experience**

Personalization, being a utilitarian variable, is somewhat linked with personal data integration, which means the degree to which consumer data and previous consumption information can be completely integrated and made available across all platforms (Mats van Essen, 2016). Customer experience is built up by the freedom to choose and the transparent information provided, so that the customer can access and choose according to personalized choice (Bilighan *et al.* 2016). Personalization attempts to please consumers by providing a variety of items at the best time and in the best ambience (Sunikka & Bragge, 2012). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *Personalization is positively related to customer experience in omni-channel retail.*

**Channel Service Configuration and Customer Experience**

In the omni-channel retailing concept, the channel service configuration refers to the framework of accessibility and adaptability across all channels (Le & Le, 2020). It is classified into breadth and transparency through which customers can move with ease from one channel to another throughout their purchase journey (Kazancoglu & Aydin, 2018) and access information regarding similarities and the differences across the channels which will create a pleasant experience for buyers (Kembro & Norrman, 2019; Shen *et al.* 2018). Transparency and accurate information provided also helps customers avail channel/s that offer the best service (Shen *et al.* 2018). Hence, following hypothesis is proposed:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** *Channel service configuration is positively related to customer experience in omni-channel retail.*

## Integrated Interactions and Customer Experience

Integrated interactions relate to a retailer's information and process qualities being consistent and uniform across several channels (Sousa & Voss; 2006, Le *et al.* 2019). This factor has two other dimensions : (a) content consistency, and (b) process consistency. Content consistency refers to the uniform information and responses which is interchangeable between various channels. This will resolve the confusion of the customers and thereby facilitate a positive and flawless customer experience while flipping through various channels. On the other hand, process consistency refers to the uniformity of pertinent and comparable process qualities of distinct channels (Shen *et al.* 2018). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed :

**H<sub>3</sub>:** *Integrated interactions is positively related to customer experience in omni-channel retail.*

### 3. Research Methodology

#### (a) Data Collection

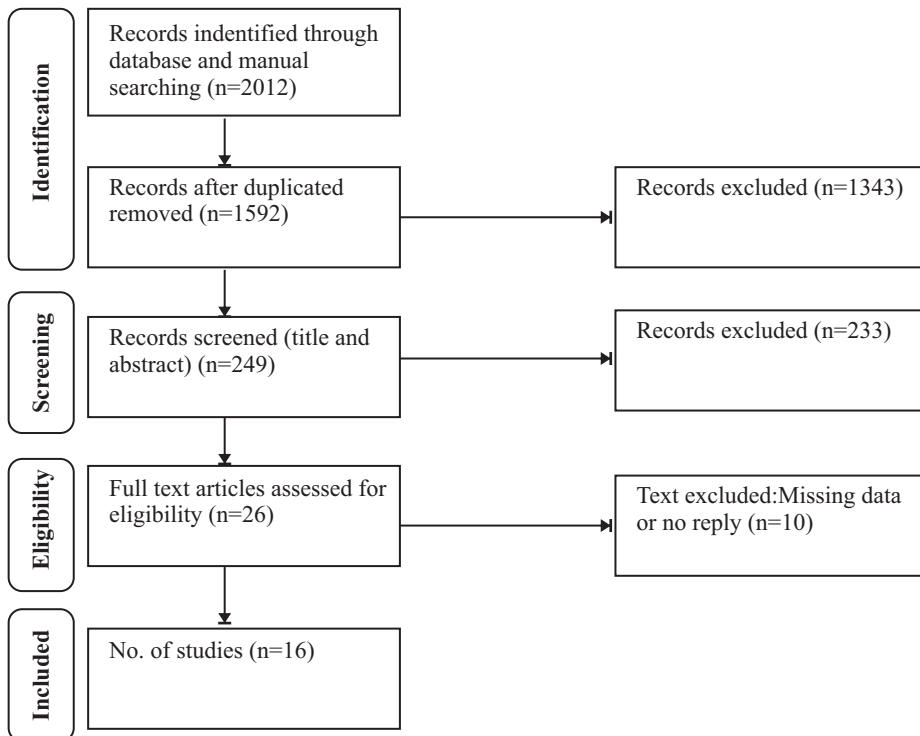
A thorough systematic literature survey was done in relevant databases to obtain the data set of relevant studies published between the years 2012-2022. Few studies have been published between the years 2002 to 2012. However, after the initial discussion this time period was dropped from the present study as very little studies have been published during the time period. However, the current study has focused on the studies published between the years 2012 to 2022 only. The search was conducted initially through Google Scholar using keywords like: "Channel integration", "Utilitarian", "Satisfaction", "Repurchase intention" along with "customer experience" in "Omni-channel retailing". However, we dropped words such as "satisfaction" and "repurchase intention" as less number of studies focused on the relationship between these variables. In addition, more studies were searched within Emerald and Scopus databases using the same keywords.

#### Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

The overall literature search resulted in scanning the articles published in 2012 and papers reporting empirical and conceptual studies that included customer experience relationships. 'Google Scholar' yielded 1428 articles, the Emerald search yielded 146

articles and Scopus yielded 438 articles. There were overlapping of 420 articles which were excluded from subsequent searches thereby reducing the selection to 1592 articles. These were screened on the basis of title and abstracts which resulted in further exclusion of 1343 articles. The remaining articles were evaluated based on the eligibility criteria in which 10 papers were discarded due to missing data or 'no reply' from requested researchers. Thus, 16 studies were finally included in the study. The final meta-analytic sample contained a total of 10,518 customers between the years 2012 to 2022. The diagrammatic presentation of inclusion and exclusion criteria is shown in Figure I.

**Figure I : Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**



#### 4. Results and Discussion

The objectives of study were to examine:

- (a) the association between personalization and customer experience,
- (b) the relationship between channel service configuration and customer experience, and
- (c) finding the relationship between integrated interactions and customer experience.

Meta-Essentials Workbook of Suurmond et al. (2015) has been used for meta-analysis in this study. Table 2 represents the correlation between personalization and customer experience with varying sample sizes and countries which have been included in the meta-analysis.

**Table 2: Personalization and Customer Experience**

<i>Sr. No.</i>	<i>Study Name</i>	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Country Classification</i>
1	Rose <i>et al.</i> , 2012	0.31	220	USA& Europe	Developed
2	Zhang <i>et al.</i> , 2014	0.474	563	China	Developing
3	Boman & Dimberg, 2016	0.601	360	Gothenburg	Developed
4	Matthéüs Jacobus, 2016	0.12	283	Online survey of diff. countries	Both developed & developing
5	Mclean, 2018	0.662	1024	UK	Developed
6	Alam & Gani, 2019	0.46	203	Bangladesh	Developing
7	Tyrvainen <i>et al.</i> , 2020	0.585	2334	Sweden	Developed
8	Tyrvainen <i>et al.</i> , 2020	0.55	2084	Finland	Developed
9	Wang & Yu, 2021	0.455	360	China	Developing
10	Hamouda, 2021	0.409	118	Tunisia	Developing

Source: Author's research

A total of 10 selected studies. conducted in different countries, represents the association between personalization and customer experience, and, identified on the basis of variables included in the current study. We found a moderate positive relation between personalization and customer experience. It means that an increase in personalization



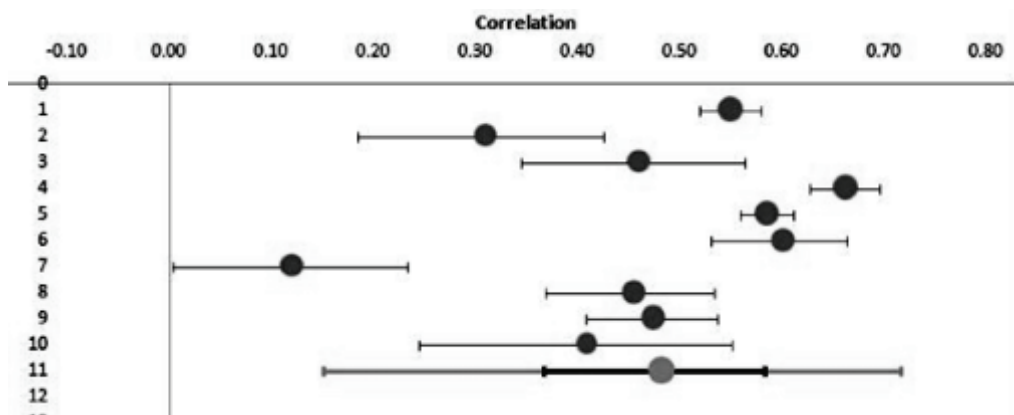
leads to an increase in customer experience. This implies that there is a positive effect between personalization and customer experience irrespective of the countries. The sample size taken for these studies range between 118 to 2084. In order to examine the effect-size between personalization and customer experience, Table 3 gives the rule of thumb showing the strength of the relationship between these two.

**Table 3: Coefficient of Correlation**

<i>Coefficient 'r' Range (absolute value)</i>	<i>Strength of Relationship</i>
0.00-0.19	Very Weak
0.20-0.39	Weak
0.40-0.59	Moderate
0.60-0.79	Strong
0.80-1.00	Very Strong

Source: Care et al., 2018

**Figure II: Forest Plot of the Association Between Personalization and Customer Experience**



Notes: Confidence interval at 95%; P-Value < 0.05; I2- 93.91%

Figure II gives the results of the meta-analysis including the forest plot at 95 percent confidence interval. A total of 10 studies have been found to be dedicated to

personalization and customer experience. The combined effect-size of personalization and customer experience is found to be 0.48, which indicates a moderate positive relationship (Table III).

- Hence,  $H_1$ : Personalization is positively related to customer experience in omni-channel retail is accepted. At 95 per cent confidence interval, the limits range between 0.37 to 0.58 which represents the location of the true population parameter or how well the mean is determined. The outcome of the forest plot represents that the prediction-interval value ranges between 0.15 to 0.71, thereby forecasting that the future studies will lie between these limits. The prediction-interval lower limit (0.15) represents a very weak positive relationship between them, whereas the prediction interval upper limit (0.71) represents the strong positive relationship (Table 3). P-value is less than 0.05, which means personalization has a significant impact on customer experience. The heterogeneity (I<sup>2</sup>) value is 93.91 percent, which shows the high heterogeneity percentage This means all the studies included are different from each other.

**Table 4: Channel Service Configuration and Customer Experience**

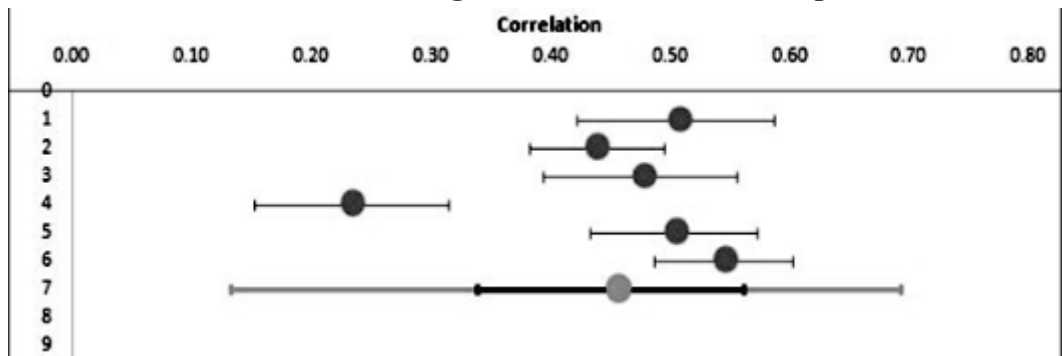
Sr. No.	Study Name	Correlation	N	Country	Country Classification
1	Qi & Yan, 2019	0.547	569	China	Developing
2	Hanh Le & Nguyen-Le, 2020	0.509	312	Veitnam	Developing
3	Quach <i>et al.</i> , 2020	0.44	786	US	Developed
4	Hai Ninh Nguyen, 2021	0.479	351	Veitnam	Developing
5	Gao <i>et al.</i> , 2021	0.506	434	China	Developing
6	Chen <i>et al.</i> , 2022	0.235	517	Taiwan & China	Developed & developing

Source: Author's research

A total of 6 studies have been considered to measure the impact of channel service configuration on customer experience among the customers of various countries (Table

4). Surprisingly no study from India is a part of this section. The correlation coefficient of these studies has been used to draw the argument that there is a positive relationship between channel service configuration and customer experience. The sample size ranges from 312 to 786. This relationship is clearly indicated by the forest plot as shown in Figure III.

**Figure III: Forest Plot of the Association Between Channel Service Configuration and Customer Experience**



Notes: Confidence interval at 95%; P-Value < 0.05; I2- 88.90%

Figure III presents the results of the meta-analysis which explains the association between channel service configuration and customer experience. A total of six studies have been extracted that are used to study the current relationship between dependent and independent variables. The combined effect-size of the channel service configuration and customer experience was found to be 0.46, which shows a moderate positive relationship (95 per cent CI: 0.34 to 0.56) (Table 3).

- Hence, **H<sub>2</sub>**: Channel Service Configuration is positively related to customer experience in omni-channel retail is accepted.

The result of the forest plot shows that the prediction interval value varies between 0.13 and 0.69. The prediction interval at a lower limit (0.13) represents a very weak positive relationship between channel service configuration and customer experience. The prediction interval's upper limit (0.69) represents a strong positive association between the variables (Table 3). The heterogeneity (I2) value is 88.90 percent which shows high heterogeneity among the results of other various studies.

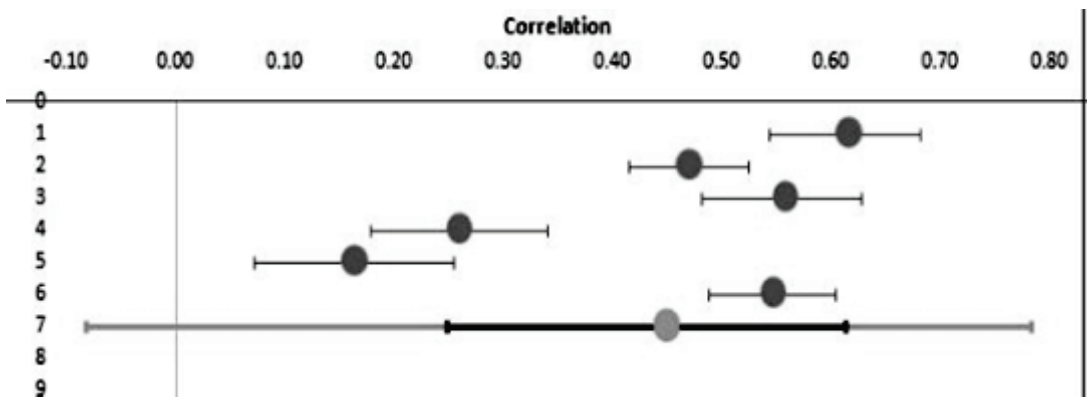
**Table 5: Integrated Interactions and Customer Experience**

Sr. No.	Study Name	Correlation	N	Country	Country Classification
1	Qi & Yan, 2019	0.547	569	China	Developing
2	Hanh Le & Nguyen-Le, 2020	0.616	312	Veitnam	Developing
3	Quach <i>et al.</i> , 2020	0.47	786	Us	Developed
4	Hai Ninh Nguyen, 2021	0.558	351	Veitnam	Developing
5	Gao <i>et al.</i> , 2021	0.164	434	China	Developing
6	Chen <i>et al.</i> , 2022	0.26	517	Taiwan & China	Developed & developing

Source: Author's research

In order to explore the association between integrated interactions and customer experience, a total of six studies have been analyzed through Meta-Essentials software. Table 5 shows that a positive relationship is confirmed between integrated interactions and customer experience. This relationship is confirmed by analyzing the correlation coefficient of these studies. The results have been drawn on the basis of studies conducted in various countries. Surprisingly, no study from India has been found dedicated to such a relationship. The sample size of these studies ranges from 312 to 786. The strength of relationship is clearly explained using the forest plot (Figure IV).

**Figure IV: Forest plot of the association between Integrated Interactions and Customer Experience**



Notes: Confidence interval at 95%; P-Value < 0.05; I2- 95.11%

Figure IV highlights the results of the meta-analysis in order to study the relationship between integrated interactions and customer experience. A total of six studies have been extracted. The combined effect size of the integrated interactions and customer experience is 0.45, which shows a moderate positive relationship (95 percent CI: 0.25 to 0.61)(Table 3).

- Hence, **H<sub>3</sub>**: Integrated Interactions is positively related to the customer experience in omni-channel retail is accepted.

The result of the forest plot shows that the prediction interval values range between -0.08 and 0.78. Prediction interval at a lower limit (-0.08) represents a very weak negative relationship between integrated interactions and customer experience. The prediction interval at an upper limit (0.78) represents a strong positive relationship between integrated interactions and customer experience (Table 3). P-value is less than 0.05, which means integrated interactions have a significant influence on customer experience. The heterogeneity (I<sup>2</sup>) value is 95.11 per cent, which leads to high variations in the studies.

**Table 6 : Random-effects, Average Correlation and heterogeneity statistics for Select Antecedents of Customer Experience**

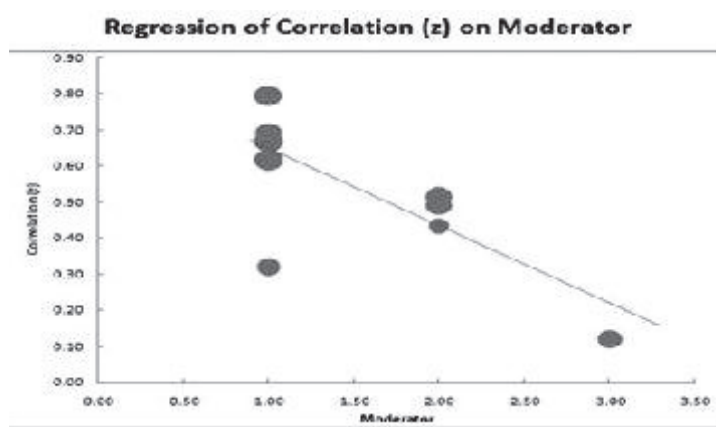
<i>Association</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>r+</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>Q</i>	<i>I<sup>2</sup></i>
Personalization-Customer Experience	7549	10	0.48	0.37-0.58	147.78***	93.91
Channel Service Configuration – Customer Experience	2969	6	0.46	0.34-0.56	45.06***	88.9
Integrated Interactions – Customer Experience	2969	6	0.45	0.25-0.61	102.30***	95.11
<i>n</i> = number of participants; <i>k</i> = number of effect sizes included in the analysis; CI= 95% confidence interval; <i>Q</i> and <i>I<sup>2</sup></i> = tests of heterogeneity; <i>r+</i> = random effects average correlation; ***p <001;						

Source: Author's research

### Meta-Regression

Meta-regression is also known as moderator analysis. In this study, the country works as a moderator for the association between personalization, channel service configuration, integrated interactions and customer experience. Developed countries are coded as 1, developing countries are coded as 2 while both developed and developing are coded as 3.

**Figure V: Moderator Analysis of Personalization and Customer Experience**



According to Figure V, the moderator analysis confirms that when the moderator is 1, correlation is moderate positive; when the moderator is 2, the correlation moves downward showing less correlation for developing countries; and, when the moderator is 3, the correlation is weak positive. The country classification moderated the personalization and customer experience association, ( $p < 0.01$ ), showing 58.27 percent variance explained by the independent variable. This analysis shows that when the study is based in developed countries then there is a moderate positive relationship between personalization and customer experience. When the study is based in both developed and developing countries, there is a weak positive association between the variables. It is also found that respondents of developed countries have a higher correlation than developing countries for the association between personalization and customer experience.

**Figure VI : Moderator Analysis of Channel Service Configuration and Customer Experience**

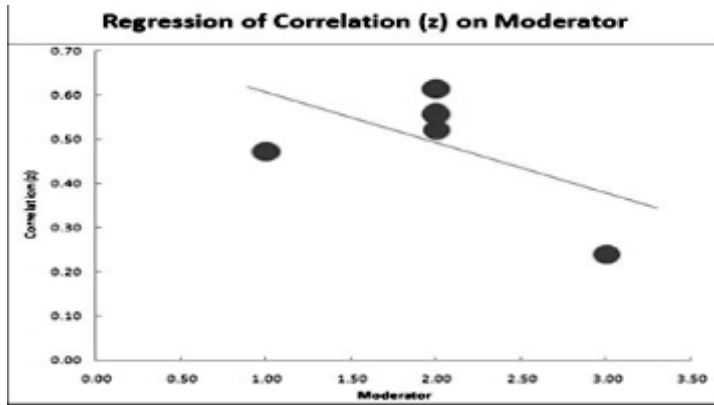


Figure VI shows the moderator analysis of channel service configuration and customer experience. Here, it is shown that when only developed countries are taken, the correlation coefficient between channel service configuration and customer experience is moderate positive; whereas when the study considered both developed and developing countries; the correlation coefficients have become weak positive. The country classification moderated the integrated interaction and customer experience association ( $p < 0.01$ ), showing that 29.79 percent variance is explained by the independent variable. The results of the meta-analysis show that in developed countries channel service configuration plays a huge role in influencing customer experience, and, therefore this factor has a high positive correlation as compared to developing countries.

**Figure VII: Moderator Analysis of Integrated Interaction and Customer Experience**

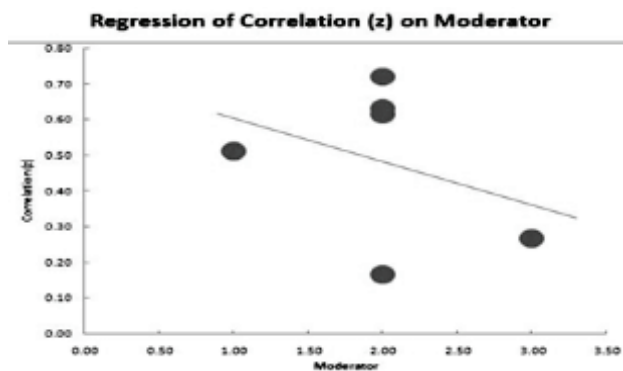


Figure VII depicts the moderator analysis of integrated interaction and customer experience. The outcome of the moderator analysis shows that, if the study is based in developed countries, the correlation coefficient between integrated interaction and customer experience is moderate positive, whereas when the study is based in both developed and developing countries, the correlation coefficients become weak positive. Country classification moderated the integrated interaction and customer experience association, ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that 12.33 per cent variance is explained by independent variable. This shows that the retailers have successfully adapted and implemented the omni-channel strategies in developed countries as compared to developing countries and thereby has a higher positive correlation than developing countries.

#### 4. Conclusion and Future Research Directions

Currently Omni-channel presents manifold advantages and have importance after the introduction of multi-channel, and, their combining has changed the whole retail landscape ever since. Customer experience plays an important role in omni-channel in this context. In this study, we utilized the meta-analysis techniques to give a systematic overview of the literature on the select antecedents of customer experience. The systematic research of 16 papers, which fulfill the criteria for inclusion, and, using Meta-Essentials software revealed that we could consider personalization, channel-service configuration and integrated interactions as significant antecedents of customer experience. The study aims to find out the effect-size among these variables to identify the correlation or strength between them through forest plot. The correlation coefficient has been extracted from the earlier studies in order to detect the influence of *personalization, channel service configuration, integrated interactions* on customer experience.

The findings of meta-analysis reveal that personalization is positively associated with customer experience. This conclusion is in alignment with the results of the previous studies which also concur that personalization has a significant impact on customer experience (Rose *et al.* 2012; Bilgihan *et al.* 2015; Pappas *et al.* 2017; McLean *et al.* 2018). The influence of channel service configuration, integrated interactions on customer experience is also found moderately positive. For further insights, meta regression is done by taking the selected country as a moderator. We classified the



countries as 'developed' and 'developing'. The results show that when the studies are based in developed countries, there is a moderate positive relationship, but when the studies are based in developing countries, there is a weak positive correlation. The plausible reasons for the analyzed differences between the countries might be the effectiveness of well-planned omni-channel strategies implemented by the retailers of developed countries.

This study has certain limitations as well. The present meta-analysis incorporates only a few studies and includes only some antecedents of customer experience. Other variables like customer empowerment, hedonic motivation, etc., may be included in order to study the customer experience in omni-channel retail. The outcomes of customer experience may also be taken up for future studies.

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