

**Omnichannel index of fashion and lifestyle retailers from  
a customers' perspective.  
Indexing COS, Levi's, Hugo Boss, and Pull&Bear.**

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**List of Contents**

Abstract .....3

Table of Abbreviations.....4

List of Tables .....5

List of Figures.....6

1 Introduction .....7

2 Literature Review .....8

2.1 Definition and Differentiation .....8

2.2 Status quo of Recent Research..... 11

2.2.1 The Concept of Omnichannel ..... 11

2.2.2 Opportunities and challenges..... 13

2.3	Effects .....	13
2.4	The evolution of consumer behavior .....	14
2.5	Omnichannel Customer Journey .....	19
3	Methodology .....	23
4	Findings.....	25
4.1	COS.....	26
4.2	Levi's .....	28
4.3	Hugo Boss .....	31
4.4	Pull and Bear.....	33
4.5	Calculation .....	36
5	Conclusion .....	36
6	List of References .....	39
7	Appendix.....	46
7.1	Appendix I.....	46
7.2	Appendix II.....	48

## **Abstract**

There is no doubt that the amplification of channel integration towards an omnichannel structure is a powerful idea whose time has finally come. The digitally cross-linked world postulates all-encompassing, ubiquitous, and unobtrusive future services. In the concomitant, increasingly competitive market, retailers are starting to lay the foundation for omnichannel, meeting the expectations of a digitally cunning audience wanting their shopping experience to be as seamless and uncomplicated as possible. Nevertheless, recent researches show that there are still enough avenues for further research on omnichannel. Until now, the performance of companies was solely considered by experts from a suppliers' point of view. It would be rather interesting to find out whether the desire to meet the increased customer expectations is also recognized by the customers themselves. This paper seeks to answering how the purchasing behavior has changed and what customers demand. In addition, it elaborates the opportunities that are promoted by omnichannel. Searching out all the effects, the paper will get to a final step, where it can be attested how the omnichannel performance of fashion and lifestyle retailers can be measured from a consumers' perspective by developing an exclusive index. The study is confined to four fashion and lifestyle retailers: Hugo Boss AG, Levi Strauss & Co, Pull and Bear as well as COS. Using the scientific method of mystery shopping and a multi-item checklist including 54 key performance indicators, the paper aims to examine to which extend the four selected retailers provide a seamless customer journey, according to the five decision-making phases.

Keywords: Omnichannel Index, COS, Levi's, Hugo Boss, Pull&Bear

## Table of Abbreviations

<b><i>Abbreviation</i></b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<i>BOPIS</i>	Buy Online, Pick-up In Store
<i>BORIS</i>	Buy Online, Return In Store
<i>IoT</i>	Internet of Things
<i>KPI</i>	Key Performance Indicator
<i>OMS</i>	Order Management System
<i>POS</i>	Point of Sale
<i>WOM</i>	Word-out-mouth

## List of Tables

Table 1: Derivation of KPI Weighting.....	25
Table 2: Omnichannel Index - Weighted score COS & Levi's.....	36
Table 3: Omnichannel Index - Weighted score Hugo Boss & Pull & Bear .....	36
Table 4: List of literature search words including number of received results .....	46
Table 5: Omnichannel Index - Master Cube .....	48
Table 6: Omnichannel Index - Evaluation using Harvey Balls.....	51

**List of Figures**

Figure 1: The traditional buying process ..... 15

Figure 2: The “new” buying process ..... 16

Figure 3: An Example of a Customer Omnichannel Journey according to the Omnichannel Index..... 19

# 1 Introduction

“Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come.” - Victor Hugo

Every 50 years retailing undergoes a fundamental modification. A century and a half ago the trend of urbanization and the rise of railroad networks enabled the success of modern department stores. While the 1960s and 1970s were characterized by the spread of discount chains, the digital age of the 1990s marked an epoch-making shift in understanding the retailing business. The introduction of digital retail technologies triggered a tremendous diversification of the previously rather streamlined consumer behavior ('How Did We Get Here?', 2013). Each wave of change, however, did not eliminate what came before, but it reshaped the landscape and redefined consumer's expectations often beyond recognition. Digitalization moved into the focus of the consumer's life to an extent that was not even imaginable a few years ago. Today, digital natives, also called millennials are no longer concerned about the purchase of a thing itself. Another, but more importantly better way of consumption is requested. The conventional sales policy of brick-and-mortar shops is therefore no longer enough. In a digitally cross-linked world, future services must be all-encompassing, ubiquitous, and above all, unobtrusive. This is the moment “omnichannel” is coming into play: a powerful idea whose time has come. As “digital channels [do] no longer only serve to provide pre-purchase information; they have become standalone transaction platforms. Primarily thanks to mobile devices, global online clothing and shoe retailing is growing at a rate three times that of the market overall. Independent of channel and device, fashion consumers expect a seamless shopping experience, which presents big challenges for retailers and their partners, requiring them to fuse links between these channels.” (Keller, Magnus, Hedrich, Nava, & Tochtermann, n.d.). It is helpful to capture and evaluate the multitude of complex and fast-moving customer data. To this

end, sophisticated technologies and IT structures are required, which enable the companies to identify, by means of systematic algorithms, when, how and to what extent the customer will make his next purchase. The aim is the interplay of brick-and-mortar, online formats and digital tools, what enables consumers to browse and purchase products through any channel of their preference on a 24/7 basis, anywhere at any time (Keller et al., n.d.).

This paper aims at answering how the purchasing behavior has changed and what customers demand. In addition, it elaborates on what opportunities are promoted by omnichannel. Searching out the effects of omnichannel as well as the change in customer behavior, we will get to our final step, where we will attest how to measure the omnichannel performance of fashion and lifestyle retailers from a consumers' perspective by developing an exclusive index. Taking advantage of a deductive approach, selected points of reference based on further research and predetermined indexes are used for developing an own omnichannel index especially directed on apparel companies with stores in Germany. Assessing the validity of those aspects will help to measure the overall omnichannel performance of the respective retailer. The actual measuring of the retailers' performance will be undertaken with mystery shopping in the following four companies Hugo Boss AG, Levi Strauss & Co, Pull and Bear, and COS. Including online test buying on different devices as well as shopping in a brick and mortar store, the procedure will cover all available channels.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Definition and Differentiation**

“There is no doubt that the omnichannel world is here to stay” (Griffin, Dunne, & Green, n.d.). The quantum technological advance as well as the increasing convergence of digitalization strongly impacts the consumer behavior, the markets development, and the interaction between companies and consumers. Thus, companies are the subject to a constant adjustment process, with the avant-garde setting the benchmark and forcing other companies to compete. In this increasingly competitive market, retailers are starting to lay the foundation for omnichannel, meeting the expectations of a digitally cunning audience wanting their shopping experience to be as

seamless and uncomplicated as possible, albeit, there is a tremendous amount of work to be done. Against this background, research has focused on the concept of how the many channels can be handled synergistically to maximize the consumer experience. Nevertheless, the term omnichannel is rather new in the academic literature. It was first mentioned in April 2012 in Aubrey and Judge's (2012) article 'Reimagine retail: Why store innovation is key to a brand's growth in the "new normal", digitally connected and transparent world.' Both in practice and in research, many channel management approaches coexist, what leads to the difficulty of a various number of terms, describing different concepts without clear distinctions. In order to eliminate ambiguities regarding the term omnichannel management and to understand current topics discussed by omnichannel management research, it is essential to delimit the term from related approaches. Terms such as multichannel management, cross channel management, omnichannel management and channel integration are often used interchangeably and without demarcation, which leads to uncertainty and a lack of distinction regarding the underlying concept (Klaus, 2013). But how can omnichannel management be defined and differentiated from other management concepts of several channels? In general, channels are referred to as the sum of routes or paths by which a company delivers products, services, or information to recipients (Mehta, Dubinsky, & Anderson, 2000). Examples include stores, hotlines and websites. As these customer contact points have become the norm, a 'broad set of principles by which a firm seeks to achieve its distribution objectives' (Mehta et al., 2000), also called a channel strategy, is particularly in today's competitive environment. In order to analyze, plan, organize, and control their channels, every company should arrange an in-house channel management. This can range from the complete separation of channels with individual considerations to total integration with full channel coordination (Neslin et al., 2006).

### Multichannel Management

Often the concept of multichannel is used as an umbrella term to describe different strategies, regardless of the channel configuration (Beck & David Rygl, 2015; P.C. Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015). The set of activities, selling through more than one channel, contains "the design, deployment, coordination, and evaluation of channels to enhance customer value through effective customer acquisition, retention, and development" (Neslin et al., 2006). This approach suggests that the channels are treated separately and are generally managed by different departments, which means that there is no channel integration and no exchange of data across channels.



## Omnichannel Management

The term raises specific and relevant questions that were not relevant in the multi-channel context, including data integration, organizational change, pricing across various channels and the aligned management of a broad range of channels. Compared with the previously described concept, the barriers between all channels and touchpoints vanish completely. In fact, freely moving and switching by consumers among all contact points is not only anticipated but favored (Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014a; P.C. Verhoef et al., 2015). The integration of channels allows a seamless customer experience, a unique brand image, data sharing, and overall management. In general, the omnichannel concept is the most extensive approach offering several channels and touchpoints (P.C. Verhoef et al., 2015).

## **2.2 Status quo of Recent Research**

The following chapter aims to analyze in detail the current state of omnichannel research. Despite the concept of omnichannel-retailing is still in its early ages, the various conclusions of different dissertations on this topic can be segmented into two main streams. Omnichannel concept requirements as well as the concomitant opportunities and challenges, can be identified as the primary topics in the omnichannel literature.

### **2.2.1 The Concept of Omnichannel**

The most frequent topic in preceding literature concerns about the strategic aspects of the omnichannel-idea as well as about the theory of how companies that are seeking for the establishment of omnichannel should conceptualize their approach. Verhoef, Kannan and Inman defined “omni-channel management as the synergetic management of the numerous available channels and customer touchpoints, in such a way that the customer experience across channels and the performance over channels is optimized”(P.C. Verhoef et al., 2015). Against the backdrop of this concept, “ubiquitous mobile access, social network, and the much talked about internet of things (IoT) are seeing customer journeys switch between numerous channels and devices” (Griffin et al., n.d.). To achieve excellence in this new shift in retailing, well established retail businesses must adopt a new perspective for doing business. Meeting those enhanced customer expectations, while at the same time searching for greater

profitability, can require extra work, especially for older businesses (Griffin et al., n.d.). The objective is to integrate and optimize the retailers whole value chain, what means, that changes in retail concept, flow management, organization, as well as in HR and relationship management are required (Cao, 2014). A flexible logistic system as well as a synchronization of merchandising is therefore essential to maximize product turnover and minimize mismatches between the channels (Neslin et al., 2006). But in the face of continuous increase of channels the physical store remains the main hub to provide customers with an outstanding shopping experience. In order to provide an additional dimension to this shopping experience an improvement of the store environment through innovative store technologies is necessary (Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014a). The application of these new technologies in-store makes shopping faster, easier, and more pleasurable for consumers. Especially the ability for customers to check cheaper alternatives on mobile devices while shopping in-store has created new challenges. A detailed list of the new services and mobile solutions that should be offered by well advanced retailers can be found in the constructed index that will be examined in subsequent chapters. Another big challenge in implementing an omnichannel strategy is to manage the flows of goods, services and information. Therefor only a clear and concise IT-strategy will allow retailers to deliver a seamless linkage across all channels. Solely IT- innovations like the order management system (OMS) (Deloitte,2015), can process orders and provide transparency, a general view of inventory, delivery options as well as customer information. This information and the interaction with different channels becomes key for both uncovering drivers of sales and channel use patterns. It forces retailers to build supplement long term strategic data programs that can integrate information across all channels and allow such data to be analyzed holistically (Lewis, Whysall, & Foster, 2014). But the restructuring doesn't end with digitalization. One of the key factors that is integral to omnichannel excellence is organizational structure (Griffin et al., n.d.). Due to the presence of disjointed structures, silos still remain across companies. These have to "be broken down to enable a single, holistic view of the customer and their interaction with the brand" (Griffin et al., n.d.). Consequently, organizational aspects, such as restructuring of the organization shift in corporate culture, redesign of incentive systems, and recruitment of new competence have to be retrieved. The new structure should make it possible to redistribute expertise, and facilitate the coordination between quickly moving units and time-honored departments thanks to new communications patterns (Cao, 2014).

## 2.2.2 Opportunities and challenges

As already identified in the prior chapter, the realization of new strategies in order to implement omnichannel steadily has to face obstacles. The second stream that was noticed in the examination regarding omnichannel therefore focuses on the challenges during its implementation and the arising possibilities. Various aspects have to be improved or restructured before benefits can be achieved. As was already mentioned before, retailers should start sharing the common resources, integrate analyzable data to achieve a seamless view of the consumer and apply certain channel synergies. However, not only has this reorganization constituted a challenge. The ensuing investment for the right IT, the evaluation of the profitability of individual channels as well as customer acquisition, extension and retention continue to be challenging for striving companies (Lewis et al., 2014; Neslin et al., 2006). But how does omnichannel actually add value? In the first place omnichannel is helping companies to respond “to the complexities of real life and the diverse ways in which consumers interact with brands and make decisions” (Griffin et al., n.d.). These new insights lead to an increased awareness and “provide relevant and personalized moments that build engagement and loyalty between a consumer and a brand” (Griffin et al., n.d.). Yet these changes do not only affect customer convenience. Also, intra-organizational improvements in flexibility, communication and other weaknesses can be noticed (Sousa & Voss, 2006).

## 2.3 Effects

The big aim is to achieve higher sales and happier customers by creating more opportunities for purchase and by facilitating the interaction journey. But do omnichannel experiences actually produce better returns than single or multichannel operations? The data says yes. The Deloitte Holiday Survey from 2012 found that omnichannel customers expect to spend 71% more than single channel shoppers (Griffin et al., n.d.). “According to a 2015 study by analyst IDC, omnichannel shoppers have a 30% higher lifetime value than those who make purchases using only one channel. With up to 63% of shoppers using multiple channels when making orders over £100, providing a cohesive experience will help unlock higher value purchases” (Griffin et al., n.d.).

## 2.4 The Evolution of Consumer Behavior

Customer behavior describes the “mental, emotional and physical activities that people engage in when selecting, purchasing, using and disposing of products and services so as to satisfy needs and desires” (Naveen, 2013, p. 75, as cited by Wilkie, 1994). It enables an explanation of the phases a customer passes through making his purchasing decision as well as a prediction of his line of action. Accordingly, comprehending this is extremely important for retailers, especially with permanently changing circumstances nowadays.

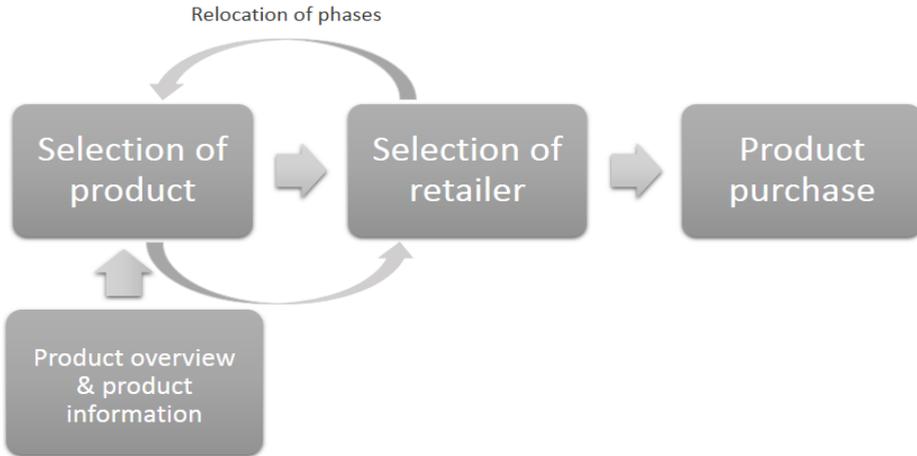
The consumer’s overall key interests include getting inspiration and satisfying his needs. To achieve those demands, he needs to select a retailer of his choice by gathering and validating information based on his subjective requirements and expectations. After picking out a retailer, the customer initiates the actual buying process (Rudolph, 2009). Arrived at the point-of-sale (POS) he gains an overview of the products available, shops around and ponders whether to carry out a purchase or not. The retailers advising as well as the price ratio contribute either to the actual implementation or to the customer leaving for rivalry. Pursuing the classic purchasing process the customer’s point-of-sale and point-of-decision coincide. Consequently, selecting and decision making proceeds on the spot, thus the whole value added takes place at the retailers’ point-of-sale with no need to share the remuneration for their services (Gehrckens & Boersma, 2013).



**Figure 1: The traditional buying process**  
 Adapted from: (Heinemann & Gaiser, 2016)

Accompanied by the arising of the Internet era in the nineties, a major alteration in the consumer's purchasing behavior came along. Enabling a quicker and easier way in shopping, it also provides a huge information content. Test reports, product ratings and especially social media assist the buyer decision process, potentially even better than a real shop assistant. Especially emotion conducted buying experiences a huge impact from new technologies. Historically, the customer's information procurement of existing retailers and products was realized either by word-of-mouth (WOM) or own experiences (Simonson, 2016). Nowadays, its social media that assumes this role. Providing information about the popularity and status of articles matching the customer's respective peer group, it serves as an inspiration source. Hence, the customer's product choice takes place even before selecting a retailer. This change leads to a decoupling of the customer's decision-making process. The point-of-decision is now not necessarily longer conforming with the point-of-sale. Consequently, the proceeds are allocated to the whole value chain, implying danger for the retailers. With this intense declining importance, nowadays, retailers are literally only seen as the point-of-sale (Heinemann & Gaiser, 2016). In addition, the customer's POS turns into most precious step of the value chain contributing the biggest benefit. Around 97 per cent of German households with Internet connection conduct an online search prior

to purchasing (Gehrckens & Boersma, 2013). Barely thirty percent of these obtain information from the producer's website, check prices and observe other consumers' postings (IfD Allensbach, n.d.).



**Figure 2: The “new” buying process**

**Adapted from: (Heinemann & Gaiser, 2016)**

Furthermore, better informed multi-device customers' habits and especially expectations shift at the same time. Requesting “a consistent, uniform, and integrated service or experience” (Juaneda-Ayensa, Mosquera, & Sierra Murillo, 2016, p. 3), they want to switch seamlessly between all channels available (Cook, 2014; Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014b). Consequently, the omnichannel shopping experience doesn't take place online or offline but rather abreast. The Harvard Business Review outlined in March 2012 the importance of omni channeling primarily from a retailers' perspective, however, it indicates the changing customer behavior. Claiming a remarkable number of customers already counting as omnichannel user, whether conscious or not, it summarizes their three major desires. Flexibility, simplicity and adventure seem to be facts taken by granted nowadays and expected from retailers (Heinemann & Gaiser, 2016; Ohne Tüte, 2012). Even though online shopping provides all those factors, experts maintain consumers won't stop purchasing offline. In particular, when looking for hedonistic goods such as clothes, they prefer frisking the item in a brick

and mortar store (Crowley, Spangenberg, & Hughes, 1992; Nicholson, Clarke, & Blake-more, 2002). However, recent studies show consumer consider online shopping as a leisure-time activity (Blázquez, 2014). All in all, customers demand the same capabilities on all channels available to use, depending on the time of the day, their individual preferences and circumstances. Consequently, omnichannel retailer and brands are urgently needed to comply the consumers requires (Juaneda-Ayensa et al., 2016; McCormick et al., 2014).

### **Decision-making process**

The changing customer behavior results in a simultaneously alteration in the consumer decision-making process. A large number of broadly similar studies and literature has already been published on this subject, however, the classification of the distinct phases differs (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995; Steinfield, Bouwman, & Adelaar, 2002). Traditionally, the framework of the customer shopping process is composed of five steps: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and the post purchase behavior (Kotler, n.d.; Kotler & Armstrong, 2008; Zellweger, n.d.). More recent studies refer to the following five stages: stimulation, search for information, buy, delivery and service (Pantano, 2015). Serving a base for the omnichannel customer journey and the empirical analysis, it's necessary to specify the stages a customer undergoes in his decision-making process.

At first, the customer feels an impression of deprivation influenced by either internal (e.g. hunger) or external (e.g. advertisement) stimuli. His aim is to fill this gap to satisfy his needs (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Intending to fulfill his needs, the customer seeks to gain knowledge about distinct alternatives in the second stage due to information gathering both from internal sources (e.g. memory) and external sources (e.g. reading) (Butler & Peppard, 1998; Kotler & Keller, 2012). Nowadays, online marketplaces, price search engines and communities assist the customer with his information gathering referred to the ideal product and retailer. Nevertheless, personal experiences are the most reliable sources (Heinemann & Gaiser, 2016). As Kotler and Armstrong pictured it in 2008: "It's rare that an advertising campaign can be as effective as a neighbor leaning over the fence and saying, *This is a wonderful product.*" (Munthiu, 2009, as cited in Kotler & Armstrong, 2008, p. 147). The third phase of the consumer's buying process involves the mental analyzation and evaluation of the existing alterna-

tives. Since the second and the third phase are more and more approaching in reference to omnichannel, recent studies pooled and described those just as “Search for Information” (Pantano, 2015; van Delft, 2013).

Based on the result of phase three, the customer now finalizes a decision what, where and how much to buy. Although, this individual decision is geared to his requirements it may be governed especially by unexpected factors (e.g. a special offer). The rising importance of e-commerce now entails new factors regarding delivery, return policy, payment and security. The marketers need to adjust to the customers rising standards, providing an easy accessible website with clear explanations during the whole purchasing process as well as a stylish design and graphical features. “Straightforward routines with minimum complexity and maximum compatibility with marketplace patterns of behavior” (Butler & Peppard, 1998, p. 8) are desperate for fulfilling the customers’ online shopping expectations (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Moreover, in the context of online shopping possibilities, consumers focus especially on aspects concerning delivery including the transaction from buying a product until its arriving. Due to this, studies amend the traditional five phase consumer decision-making process by adding the stage of delivery (Pantano, 2015; van Delft, 2013).

The final stage in the customer decision-making process is not the actual purchase, but the post-purchase behavior. It involves the customer contrasting his expectations with the perceived performance to analyze the level of need satisfaction. In both online and offline marketplaces, this level affects the customer’s further buying behavior, brand loyalty and word-of-mouth advertising. Whereas the post-purchase behavior in offline marketplaces impacts on the relationship of retailer and customer on a human interaction, in the virtual world its more technology based. Returning to websites with requires or complaints, consumers need a touchpoint with the marketer.

Especially in this days raising importance of E-commerce, the fifth phase shouldn't be neglected (Butler & Peppard, 1998; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Solomon, 2006).

## 2.5 Omnichannel Customer Journey

“An omnichannel customer journey consists of key interactions over multiple touch-

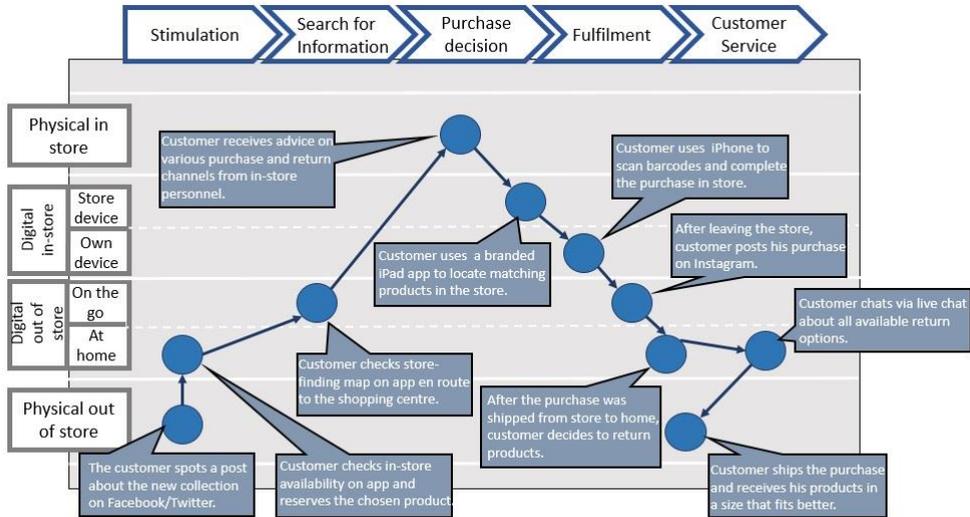


Figure 3: An Example of a Customer Omnichannel Journey according to the Omnichannel Index

points between customer [...] and a company during the point of sale and throughout the customer lifecycle” (Genesys, n.d.). Mapping the entire decision making process a customer passes through, helps retailers investigating the customers shopping experience and adjusting their channel strategies towards a seamless experience (Holland, 2014). Based on the customer behavior and different studies, potential factors for a journey satisfying the consumers’ needs are depicted in order to answer the research question in the next chapters.

## Stimulation

Omnichannel retailers are solely able to affect the external stimuli of consumers to trigger a need. With 58 percent of internet users browsing through the Internet for no other reason than gaining inspiration, one main impact is mobile advertising. As around thirty percent thereof use their mobile phones, consumer presume mobile-optimized websites providing a similar advanced user friendliness. Spending even more time on the mobile Internet than making phone calls, clear context and coherent communication are expected to be presented compactly to provide a quick and optimal display on mobile devices. Furthermore, mobile apps are ascribed as important factors in the phase of stimulation (Peter C. Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015). High usability, user value and design count as the customer's main criteria (Bovensiepen, Schmaus, & Maekelburger, 2015; Holland, 2014).

However, nowadays especially social media wield a significant influence on customers in this phase. "Social media represents a wealth of information, opinions and influence of those experienced with a product [...]" (McCormick et al., 2014, p. 82). Approximately 76 percent of Internet users are signed in a social network with 43 percent using it daily (Holland, 2014). In 2013 a Deloitte study intimated that social media serves as an inspiration for about 22 percent of interviewees. Thereof more than twenty percent were already following brands on Facebook and Twitter (Deloitte, 2013). Since nearly further two percent claim receiving stimulation on blogs, boards and other social media, an increasing percentage can be assumed (Blázquez, 2014). Yet, in particular Instagram is "very well suited for fashion retail" (McCormick et al., 2014, p. 87). Retailer share pictures of bloggers and celebrities wearing their clothes as a marketing instrument to promote their significance and popularity. Also Pinterest provides "a perfect destination for shopping inspiration and product discovery" (McCormick et al., 2014, p. 87). Creating their own online pin board, following retailers as well as searching for tags, the social network enables customers to identify styles, brands and clothes they like. Since omnichannel shoppers often seek affirmation from others, it's important for retailers to enable a sharing option on their websites as well as conducting social media marketing to maintain an important customer touchpoint (Diamond, Diamond, & Diamond Litt, 2015; McCormick et al., 2014).

Another essential factor in the need recognition phase are e-mails including pictures of new collections, special offers or updates. Studies amount to about 76 percent of customers receiving such emails still feel attracted to shop and directly click on links.

Certainly, it's important to supply mobile-optimized emails to enable customers reading regardless to the day time and device they are using (Diamond et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, since around 70 percent of purchase decisions are finalized in store, there are a few online and offline touchpoints at the point of sale. Adopting video walls, Near Field Communication or Bluetooth, retailers are able to draw the consumers' attention to targeted products and stimulate a purchase (Diamond et al., 2015; Holland, 2014). Especially touchscreen technology used in store enables an improved interaction involving vision, touch, sound and vibration and benefits the costumers experience (McCormick et al., 2014; Peter C. Verhoef et al., 2015).

### **Search for Information**

For the purpose of making an efficient and reasonable decision whether to buy an article or not, costumers seek information about prices and additional features. Barely 49 percent of respondents undertake their information research at home using a computer or laptop. In addition, 40 percent search on the go using their smartphones in public transports, during school or work. Hence, it's essential for retailers to deliver the same level of information both on websites, apps and offline to facilitate a convenient shopping experience meeting the customers' expectations (Holland, 2014). Especially the synchronization of prices, offers and information constitute an important impact in this phase. A variation of those factors online and offline may lead to a decreased predictability and customers getting confused (Bendoly, Blocher, Bretthausen, Krishnan, & Venkataramanan, 2005; Cook, 2014).

Since about 34 percent making use of their smartphone to research in store, providing free Wi-Fi at the POS simplifies the process for customers (Deloitte, 2013; Holland, 2014; McCormick et al., 2014; Peter C. Verhoef et al., 2015). Offering an app with additional information to use during the shopping process at the POS should support the customers searching phase. Therefore, the app should not be its own channel but rather enhance the in-store experience providing barcode scans or QR-codes that access additional information redirecting to the specific product page (Holland, 2014; McCormick et al., 2014). The Deloitte study in 2013 claims that already 23 percent of costumers scan barcodes in store to further research product details (Deloitte, 2013).

Concentrating on factors concerning the online research, the search and sort function is much-needed to offer a simple research process. The costumers nowadays rely

more and more on non-professional sources including other consumers' reviews and photos. For this reason, omnichannel retailer should motivate customer to interact by rating and evaluating the products. Enabling other consumers gain a better impression of the articles, the retailers' website and app should allow sorting reviews and ratings to limit the variety of choices (Ejnarsson, 2016; NRF, 2015). In addition, the ability to compare prices online and check the product availability in-store encourage a positive purchase decision (Ashman, Solomon, & Wolny, 2015). Furthermore, by using GPS applications customers want to look up the closest store as well as its product availability (Burke, 2002; Holland, 2014; McCormick et al., 2014).

### **Purchase decision**

E-commerce as well as mobile commerce is prevalent nowadays with 80 percent mostly purchasing using a computer, 56 percent buying online with a mobile device and even 27 percent thereof using an app (Griffin et al., n.d.). Moreover, 67 percent of customers are switching devices while shopping. For this reason, it's vital for fashion retailer to enable seamless purchasing via mobile devices and apps, including omnichannel offers and gift cards. "Saved shopping carts, "signed-in" experiences or the ability to email progress to oneself helps keep consumers engaged, regardless of device used" (Google, 2012, p. 44). Additionally, saved shopping bags also between channels and the ability to edit product attributes in each stage of the checkout process are required to afford flexibility (Ejnarsson, 2016; NRF, 2015). Above, payment option and the security aspect when buying online take a huge impact on the actual purchase decision (Deloitte, 2015; Holland, 2014).

### **Delivery and Return**

The omnichannel customers nowadays discern delivery and return factors as main obstacles of a seamless shopping experience. About 69 percent requesting the ability to decide how and when the delivery takes place (Deloitte, 2013). Shipping charges, delivery period and inconvenient returns with emerging costs are considered unwanted leading to far smaller chances of further customer loyalty. Yet, as approximately 77% percent use and switch between "buy online pick up in-store" (click and collect) and other delivery options, providing flexibility is the key to fulfill their needs (Griffin et al., n.d.; Janz, Hierl, Janz, & Rüschen, 2016; McCormick et al., 2014; NRF, 2015).

## Service

Providing more opportunities for customers giving feedback, new technologies also cause a transparent post-purchase process. Nowadays social medias such as Twitter and Facebook are used as a service tool (Ashman et al., 2015; Heinemann & Gaiser, 2016). Roughly 39 percent of respondents have given feedback through social networks before. However, around 60 percent still prefer customer service via email and phone (Griffin et al., n.d.). Regardless of the channel, customers demand quick responses. Especially live chats, toll free numbers or mobile click to call links aim at fulfilling this need. Besides, providing loyalty programs in terms of apps, omnichannel loyalty cards and customer IDs, promotes customer connectivity and satisfaction (Ejnarsson, 2016; Holland, 2014; NRF, 2015).

## 3 Methodology

For the purpose of answering the research question and developing an own omnichannel index, the scientific method of mystery shopping was utilized. Collecting empirical data due to this type of observation supports in measuring the omnichannel performance from a customers' perspective. The study is confined to four fashion and lifestyle retailers: Hugo Boss AG, Levi Strauss & Co, Pull and Bear as well as COS. Using distinct literature and indexes as a base, it is to examine to which extend the four selected retailers provide a seamless customer journey by deploying a compiled index.

“Mystery shopping, a form of participant observation, uses researchers to act as customers or potential customers to monitor the processes and procedures used in the delivery of a service” (Wilson, 1998, p. 148). Contrary to survey researches and interviews, data collection takes place directly and in natural settings. Facts, behaviors and feelings can be identified independent from respondents' individual conception (Friedrichs & Lüdtkke, 1975; Wilson, 1998). Since “customers don't think of themselves as “omnichannel” ” (TeleTech, 2015, p. 2), information gathering by participant observer understanding omnichannel customer behavior may lead to a wider quality and quantity of data. Furthermore, especially concealing the observation may prevent unnatural behavior of the subjects (Grove & Fisk, 1992). However, concealing mystery shopping entails ethical issues and may neglect the subjects rights to freedom and privacy (Jorgensen, 1989). Conducting mystery shopping, the observer interacts with subjects

in ordinary circumstances like any other participant. Consequently, he “is not necessarily obligated to inform people of research intentions” (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 28). Furthermore, participant observation may lead to limited validity and reliability due to subjective interpretations (observer bias) or misinterpretations (observer error) (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

Taken advantage of the deductive approach, this qualitative study was implemented. Therefore, a multi-item checklist composed of 54 selected parameters is divided in five decision-making phases according to Pantano (2015): stimulation, search for information, buy, delivery and service. Since a seamless shopping experience includes returns as much as delivery, this phase is pooled under the term “Fulfillment” (Griffin et al., n.d.; McCormick et al., 2014). The parameters were chosen based on previous research from the National Retail Federation’s “Omnichannel Retail Index 2015” as well as aspects referring to the omnichannel customer behavior (see section 2). The NRF’s index was compiled by information gathering via mystery shopping in July 2015 and examines the current state of retailers omnichannel performance in the United States (NRF, 2015).

The key performance indicators were evaluated by two observers conducting mystery shopping on the selected retailers’ websites, apps and POS in Stuttgart. For reasons of time and simplicity, no trained mystery shopper was employed and the evaluation was not conducted by a statistic program. Therefore, the analyzation may be subjective influenced and limited to the concept of two persons.

Moreover, immediately after observing, the results were recorded into the multi-item checklist to simplify the analyzation of the qualitative data. Each parameter was rated on a scale from zero to five with quality of performance in ascending order. Afterwards, every phase was analyzed, resulting in a maximum of 5 points for each phase. Since the phases of information searching, delivery and returns count as the customers’ most important stages, the points were double-weighted (Gehrckens & Boersma, 2013; Heinemann & Gaiser, 2016; Pantano, 2015). To emphasize the importance of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI), the phase weightings were divided by the number of KPIs. The actual score of a company is ultimately obtained by summing up the weighted KPI scores. They are obtained from the product of the weighting and the respective KPI rating of 0-5 (Table 1).

**Table 1: Derivation of KPI Weighting**

PHASE	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE	WEIGHTING%	#KPIs	KPI WEIGHTING % PER PHASE
Stimulation	1	11,1%	5	2,22%
Search for Information	2	22,2%	15	1,48%
Purchase Decision	1	11,1%	11	1,01%
Fulfillment - Delivery	2	22,2%	7	3,17%
Fulfillment - Return	2	22,2%	4	5,56%
Customer Service	1	11,1%	12	0,93%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>54</b>	

## 4 Findings

Within the scope of the empirical investigation, it was initially inevitable to define what kind of companies will be involved. Decisive aspects such as the company profile, the target group and the way of doing business should be clarified at the outset. Based on this information, theoretical hypotheses can be drawn up, which are essentially based on the question of to what extent the company's self-presentation can provide

facts about the state of their omnichannel-implementation. After evaluating the shopping experience by means of the omnichannel index (see Appendix II) and by visiting representative stores in Stuttgart, clear statements about the state of progress could be made and the hypotheses could be confirmed or rebutted.

## 4.1 COS

COS (short for: Collection Of Style) is a fashion concept developed by H&M in the upper price and quality segment. By launching this concept in 2007, the Hennes & Mauritz Group strives to gain a foothold in the area of medium-priced, high-quality women's and men's clothing as well as in children's fashion. COS is not a subsidiary and not an individual company, just a fashion concept from H&M. COS's clothing, accessories and footwear are offered for sale via its own network of COS stores as well as through its own COS-online shop. Their modern and minimalist store-concept is clearly distinguishable from conventional H&M stores. COS is a fashion brand for women and men who want modern, functional, considered design. "Offering reinvented classics and wardrobe essentials, [they] create pieces that are made to last beyond the season. Traditional methods and new techniques merge to form timeless, understated collections" ('COS - cosstores.com DE', n.d.). Since H&M assumes patronage for the concept of COS, it is important to deal with the self-presentation of H&M to discover the current state of the brand itself regarding omnichannel. It is assumed that these results can then be projected onto the structure of COS. The global fast fashion brand is regarded as a striving company that is keen on keeping up with the so called "zeitgeist". Due to cooperation with several festivals (e.g. Coachella), expansion to promising markets and digital innovations the brand shows the motivation when it comes to integrating digital platforms with physical stores ('H&M group', n.d.). Based on this assertion the following hypotheses can be constructed:

H1: As part of a globally- positioned company, COS is on its way to become a modern retailer, that provides a seamless integrated shopping experience for customers.

In order to verify the truthfulness of this assumption the index has to be utilized and afterwards also interpreted.

## **Stimulation**

All things considered, the COS-Store in Stuttgart did not perform well in the phase of stimulation. The brand's own efforts to create a mobile-optimized website and a mobile optimized e-mail function are worth mentioning. Nevertheless, the absence of an App for mobile devices represents a major drawback. As far as the marketing of COS is concerned, the online shop does neither refer to social media, nor to special Omni-channel functions. Also in the physical store, there is no indication of new purchasing opportunities through integrated channels.

## **Search for information**

In the second phase of the customer journey COS achieves only five of 15 points of the index. Requirements that assume the presence of an app can be evaluated with zero points. But also, the online shop leaves much to be desired. There is no way to check the in-store availability online, let alone to sort products according to their availability. The search option in the online shop is no better than a conventional search bar without any renewals, such as autocompleting or customer ratings. The navigation consists of a usual facet pattern and there are no indicators to highlight special offers like "exclusive" or "best seller". Nevertheless, the store provides free Wi-Fi and allows sharing the purchase via social media. The synchronization of prices, but not of supply, suggests that the flow management has not yet been adapted to the new developments.

## **Purchase decision**

The process of purchasing should nowadays be as fast and easy as possible. At COS, shopping in the online shop is still associated with difficulties. Functions to which consumers meanwhile have been accustomed through other shops are missing here and give the impression that the online shop is not fully developed. The function, which allows saving the bags across the channels, is not offered. Since modern customers are now used to this feature, purchasing at COS could lead to confusion. Nonetheless other important functions are available. The customers can make their purchase via the mobile-optimized website on their smartphone. The selected products can be edited in his shopping bag and saved for later. At the same time, the purchase value including shipping is simultaneously displayed. Another positive aspect is the option

of account creation. If the customer is not interested in being a linked customer of COS, he can continue shopping as a guest. Unfavorable, however, are the small payment possibilities that solely include credit cards or PayPal. More innovative possibilities, which would make a shopping experience at COS remarkable, such as an Omnichannel gift card or the possibility to order from a device in the physical store from the online shop are not offered.

## **Fulfillment**

The terms of delivery and returns are usually the decisive factors for a consumer to buy from a particular supplier. In this matter, COS unfortunately meets only two out of eight expectations in fulfilling. They provide free shipping and enable the delivery to be tracked, by making the shipping status accessible. Innovations such as click and collect or "buy in store, ship at home" have not yet penetrated the technology of COS, respectively are not yet strategically elaborated. Consequently, all associated aspects are evaluated with zero points. Also in the case of returns options, one can see that the online store and the physical stores are treated separately from each other. The desired function of buying online and returning to store (BORIS) is not provided.

## **Customer Service**

As far as customer service is concerned, COS meets four of 12 expectations in the area of personalized shopping experience. In case of questions from the customer, three methods of assistance are available but still not indicated in the page header or in checkout. Through help via email, the telephone or by a list of frequently asked questions, the customers get the possibility to inform themselves about specific matters. Advanced offers like live chats, user generated Q&A or click to call buttons on the website aren't implemented yet. Above, the staff in store also didn't seem to have outstanding information and communication skills.

## **4.2 Levi's**

Levi Strauss & Co. is a privately-owned textile company that achieved worldwide prominence due to its denim jeans. Founded in 1853, the company now owns 260 own sales outlets and over 1500 franchise business ventures. Over the course of time,

the product range expanded way beyond the original jeans production and now provides various clothing and accessories. To date, the company is one of the world's largest manufacturers of jeans and Levi's remains one of the best-known brands ever. On their website, they affirm their products to be manufactured by careful handcraft from high-grade material. The robust denim articles are "designed for a long life" ('Levi Strauss & Co.', n.d.). They also advertise with the slogan: "Made through progress" ('Levi Strauss & Co.', n.d.), which suggests that the corporation deals with innovations and always tries to adapt to the developments of the time. Accordingly, the following hypothesis can be interpreted.

H2: As a globally-positioned company, that claims to keep pace with progress, Levi's gives the impression to be a precursor in the matter of Omnichannel

### **Stimulation**

Generally speaking, the Levi's store has met almost all expectations during the stimulation phase. Apart from the absence of an app for mobile devices, the brand endeavors to offer customers a gapless range of information sources. By creating a mobile-optimized website and a mobile optimized e-mail function it is possible to submit a preferably easy search for information. The marketing through social media keeps interested parties up-to-date about its new collections, activities and advancements concerning omnichannel. Merely the physical store doesn't present specific indications about integrated channels.

### **Search for information**

Similar to the performance of COS, Levi's does poor, by achieving five out of 15 points in the phase of information search. Since an app is also missing here, all aspects that presuppose an app are evaluated with zero points. Even though the main weaknesses are in the online shop, some few elements are yet provided. In comparison to COS, Levi's offers various search options, such as sorting by customer ratings. Although the number of product evaluations is small, the possibility to write an evaluation is always given. Prices and offers from online and physical stores are synchronized. It is to suggest that Levi's is trying to integrate its sales channels. One can criticize that the Levi's store in Stuttgart doesn't provide free Wi-Fi what exacerbates a decision making via social media.

## **Purchase decision**

At Levi's, the process of the purchase decision is made as pleasant as possible. Compared to COS, all expectations from the index were met. The shopping cart can be edited and saved at any time and over different channels. A total cost breakdown including shipping is always displayed and adjusted for changes. Even in the checkout, in the last step of the order process, the buyer is offered further options on how to make his purchase. In the end, various payment methods are also made available, which in turn facilitates the shopping experience. A "checkout with PayPal" button on the page before the selection of payment methods, allows the purchase do be done even faster. The lack of an omnichannel gift card and the missing possibility to order something from the online assortment from a physical store have to be considered negative in this phase.

## **Fulfillment**

Also in the matter of fulfilment Levis comes off well. Apart from the free delivery, the online shop also offers the possibility to specify several delivery addresses. In addition, the concept of 'Buy Online Pick-up In Store' (BOPIS) is tackled and offered as a free option. Since the concept is linked to strategic changes, there are only selected stores that offer BOPIS. Due to the low number of stores offered by BOPIS and due to the lack of possibility to reserve online and buy in the store, no full score can be given. Levi's appears to be in the initial phase, in which the concept should be tested first. This might also be the reason from which the concept of 'Buy Online Return In Store' (BORIS) is not offered. The integration of the channels does not yet seem to be elaborated, which is why the return has to be done per post.

## **Customer Service**

On request, the employees kindly point out that Levi's is steadily working on integrating the channels to offer options such as BOPIS and BORIS. Generally speaking, the customer service seems to be carefully considered and customer-oriented, whereas innovations such as live-chats or user generated Q&A are still missing. Surprisingly, Levi's is less active in social media. Only on twitter, the brand refers to customer services, whereas Facebook is hardly used.

### **4.3 Hugo Boss**

HUGO BOSS is one of the leading companies in the high-end premium segment of the global garment market. Based in Metzingen, the group focuses on the development and marketing of high-quality fashion and accessories in the women's and men's clothing sector. In the financial year 2015, the company generated sales of EUR 2.8 billion with almost 14,000 employees, making HUGO BOSS one of the most profitable stock-market clothing manufacturers in the world. HUGO BOSS has significantly expanded its retail business in recent years. Particularly the e-commerce business gained importance in the last year. In the meantime, customers from a total of 11 countries can now order products through the online store. The further expansion of this sales channel and its link with the stationary retail trade were one of the most important projects of the company in fiscal year 2015 and should enable HUGO BOSS customers to achieve an even more comfortable shopping experience in the future ('Home - HUGO BOSS Corporate Website', n.d.). This is how the company presents itself on its own website, which leads to the following assumption.

H3: As a globally operating company, whose goal was the integration of the channels in 2015, HUGO BOSS will perform very well within the investigations based on the index.

#### **Stimulation**

Already in the phase of stimulation Hugo Boss achieves more points than the two predecessors. Through the app, the mobile optimized website and email all the ways of stimulation are offered. However, there are no instore or social media signage about the omnichannel possibilities. The focus is more on collections and products themselves.

#### **Search for Information**

Similar to the performance of the two predecessors, Hugo Boss does poor, by achieving only five out of 15 points in the phase of information search. Surprisingly there is no possibility to find information about the in-store availability or the possibility to sort products according to their availability. Also with regard to the search options, apart from the usual facet search, it is only offered to filter according to the popularity.

However, the references on the homepage are outstanding. Links such as "favorites of the week" or "highlights of the collection" attract the attention of the customers and offer variety in the online shop. Particularly impressive are the "Fashion Stories" and "Fashion Guide" options, which are intended to inspire customers and generate a shopping experience in the most customized way. A key criterion for channel integration is the synchronization of prices and products offered. Hugo Boss therefore offers the customer the same shopping experience both online and offline, which can be shared by the "share via social media"- buttons.

### **Purchase Decision**

The purchasing process itself is very simple at Hugo Boss. You can shop across all channels and pay with different payment methods. During the purchase, the customer is informed about all the necessary aspects and all alternatives. Only gift cards cannot be adapted to all channels. In all other respects, Hugo Boss meets all customer expectations.

### **Fulfillment**

Also with regard to the delivery, Hugo Boss tries to offer its customers as many options as possible. The progressive implementation of the BOPIS concept seems to have been successful and does not present any further difficulties for the customer. Products can be ordered online and delivered to a Hugo Boss store of their choice. On the spot, the products can be tried on, bought and returned if necessary. However, Hugo Boss is still missing some points to achieve perfection. The possibility to buy in the shop and let it be delivered home or the possibility to reserve online and buy in store is also not offered here. Contrary to the expectations, Hugo Boss has also failed to implement a sophisticated strategy for the BORIS concept. Only if the product has already been ordered into a store via click and collect, the store can incur the return.

### **Customer Service**

Relating to the customer service Hugo boss maintains a very close and transparent relationship with its customers. The target group that is able to afford a purchase at Hugo Boss, attaches great importance to personal advice. This is why the customer service is steadily pointed out during the shopping process as well as at the end of the

purchase. It generates a toll-free number, a live chat and other support. In the physical stores, the employees behave rather unobtrusively and do not point out the omnichannel possibilities to customers. As the mobile customer number is its own channel, omnichannel loyalty program is also not yet offered.

#### **4.4 Pull and Bear**

Pull & Bear is a textile company originally established in Spain. As part of the Inditex Group, Pull & Bear sells its own labels manufactured by the parent company. As with Zara, the largest Spanish textile group is also pursuing an expansive policy with Pull & Bear. In just 25 years, the brand has opened 930 stores in the main streets and shopping centers of 72 markets. With revenues increasing to EUR 1.417 billion in 2015, the brand develops parallel to its clientele and is always concerned about new technologies, social movements and the latest trends in art or music ('- PULL&BEAR Deutschland', n.d.). All this is reflected not only in the design, but also in the stores and in the online shop.

H4: As part of the Inditex Group, Pull and Bear appears to be far ahead of conventional retailers. Also in the field of Omnichannel the company seems to be a pioneer.

#### **Stimulation**

Generally speaking, the Pull and Bear store has met almost all expectations during the stimulation phase. Similar to the performance of Hugo Boss, Pull and Bear does well, by offering an app as well as a mobile optimized website and email. However, there are still some technical mistakes when using the app. It can happen that the app is not able to display the full product range or to establish a connection to the stores in order to check the availability there. Although Pull and Bear claims to develop parallel to its young target group, they are not active enough in social media marketing. Information about omnichannel are merely presented on their social media.

## **Search for Information**

In the second phase of information search, Pull and Bear emerges as the winner. With nine out of 15 satisfied expectations, Pull and Bear appears to be the closest to perfection in Omnichannel. The in-store availability is verifiable in both the app and the website. Selected products can be reserved directly in the shop. A phone number is also provided, under which you can ask the seller to keep the desired products for a certain period of time. Using an integrated map, on the app and website, customers can check the availability of a product in the nearest store. In terms of search options, Pull and Bear also offers the traditional features. When entering the search criteria into the search bar, several alternative suggestions are displayed. Extra features such as ratings or classifications by customer reviews are not offered. Navigation through a facet pattern is only possible on the website, which suggests that the app has not yet been fully customized. However, prices and supply are adjusted across all channels. This facilitates the shopping experience and allows you to acquire additional information about the product by scanning a QR code in the store. Completed purchases can always be shared via social media.

## **Purchase Decision**

Even in the third phase of the customer journey, Pull and Bear emerges as the winner. All the qualifications listed in the index for an optimized purchase decision are fulfilled. Purchasing can be done through the app as well as through the website. Orders can be processed, saved or canceled at any time. Here, too, the customer is always given an overview of the purchase value including delivery. In addition to the account creation options, various options are also offered regarding the purchase itself. If it is a gift, the credit card option is offered. This is a so called "gift ticket", a purchase receipt, which is enclosed with the order and contains neither the price of the individual items nor the total amount of the order. In addition, there are also a variety of convenient payment methods and a gift card that can be applied across all channels.

## **Fulfillment**

In order to maximize product turnover and minimize mismatches between the channels, Inditex has managed to build a flexible logistic system. By integrating the supply chains, they are capable to distribute products via both BOPIS and BORIS. However,

only the orders ordered via BOPIS are offered free of charge. Nonetheless, almost all delivery options are offered by the company. Only the "buy in store, ship at home" option has not yet been introduced. The return of online-ordered products via the store runs perfectly and requires no time-intensive declarations of consent. On the contrary to the free return delivery and the free BOPIS-delivery, it astonishes that Pull and Bear has introduced costs for the usual delivery to home, which is rather the opposite effect and rather discourages customers. However, the BORIS-offer is especially worth mentioning. The stores do not only take over the return, but even offer to pick up the unwanted products from home to spare the consumer the runway.

### **Customer Service**

The customer service appears to be very transparent and therefore tries to provide the customer all communication channels. From all over you have access to a toll-free telephone number, an email support, FAQ lists, a click to call option, as well as to a user-generated Q&A support. All these features guarantee timely support for lingering questions. Contrary to the expectations Pull and Bear does not offer a live chat and no omnichannel loyalty program. Particularly noteworthy are the in-store positioned iPads and touchscreens, which are not only used for online production, but generate direct access to social media channels.

## 4.5 Calculation

Table 2: Omnichannel Index - Weighted score COS & Levi's

	Weighting	Weighted score COS	Weighted score Levi's	Maximum weighted score
5. Customer Service	11,1%	0,19	0,33	0,54
4. Fulfillment - Delivery	22,2%	0,16	0,44	1,12
4. Fulfillment - Return	22,2%	0,28	0,28	1,12
3. Purchase Decision	11,1%	0,35	0,43	0,55
2. Search for Information	22,2%	0,30	0,37	1,125
1. Stimulation	11,1%	0,22	0,44	0,55
<b>TOTAL INDEX</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1,49</b>	<b>2,30</b>	<b>5,005</b>

Table 3: Omnichannel Index - Weighted score Hugo Boss & Pull & Bear

	Weighting	Weighted score HUGO BOSS	Weighted score Pull & Bear	Maximum weighted score
5. Customer Service	11,1%	0,36	0,40	0,54
4. Fulfillment - Delivery	22,2%	0,63	0,79	1,12
4. Fulfillment - Return	22,2%	0,28	1,11	1,12
3. Purchase Decision	11,1%	0,45	0,54	0,55
2. Search for Information	22,2%	0,34	0,64	1,125
1. Stimulation	11,1%	0,33	0,49	0,55
<b>TOTAL INDEX</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>2,40</b>	<b>3,96</b>	<b>5,005</b>

## 5 Conclusion

The main goal of the present research was to develop an index to measure the omnichannel performance of four fashion retailers from a consumers' view. Due to the digitalization causing a change in the customer behavior, the main focus was in evaluating the different touchpoints that help provide a seamless shopping experience. According to the brand awareness of the four selected fashion retailers it was assumed to receive positive results with high scores. However, pursuant to analyzing the index the actual state of affairs can be outlined by evaluating the compiled hypotheses (H1-H4).

H1:

According to the index analyzation the fashion retailer COS reached the lowest score in each phase, especially owing to the non-existent app for mobile devices and the lacking information provided on their website. Visiting the store in Stuttgart and shopping online seemed like two different channels. Consequently, COS can be classified more as a multichannel retailer. Due to this, the hypothesis needed to be rejected.

H2:

Although Levi's performed well in the customers' stimulation phase and was evaluated slightly lower comparable to Hugo Boss in most phases, the fashion retailer did not provide a seamless shopping journey. Due the retailer not providing an app, the score was lower and placed in the bottom half of the index. Nevertheless, Levi's seems to steadily improve their omnichannel development as outlined in reaching medium scores in the phases of Purchase, Fulfillment and Service. However, according to the overall low score the second hypothesis was rebutted, too.

H3:

Analyzing the omnichannel index, Hugo Boss nearly aimed its goal of channel integration especially by providing services like click and collect (BOPIS). However, due to its medium scores in all phases one can say the retailer is still in a developing stage. Above, Hugo Boss provides a rather multichannel loyalty program concerning the app and POS. For this reason, the hypothesis cannot be confirmed.

H4:

Providing new technologies such as QR codes or digital in-store touchpoints for customers, Pull and Bear was ranked far ahead based on this study. The retailer outstood with its scores in each of the five phases, thus the hypothesis was confirmed.

Due to three out of four hypotheses being rebutted, it seems like the overall self-representation of the retailers does not coincide with their actual performance regarding the indexed customer touchpoints. Notwithstanding, this reveals the effectivity of adding the developed index to ascertain the omnichannel performance of a fashion retailer from a customers' perspective.

Omnichannel appears to be prevalent nowadays, yet, its development is mostly in the early stages. Up until now, all retailers focus in particular on their e-commerce appearance and the synchronization of prices and offers between devices. Several retailers also progress in the integration of online and offline channels offering delivery and return services like BOPIS and BORIS. Some of them also enable to look up the availability of articles online and on mobile devices to support the information searching phase. However, those functionalities are not widely prevalent among the retailers and need further improvement. Furthermore, even though smartphones play a vital role in the customer's daily life, only half of the retailers provide an app to facilitate their decision-making process. Also, the majority of retailers' lack in new technologies such as digital in-store touchpoints or scanning QR-codes for further information indicate gaps regarding a seamless shopping experience. Moreover, as the importance of other consumers' recommendations and social media increased over the past years, the retailers' overall performance is rated insufficient to fulfill the customer's needs. To sum up, omnichannel is present, at least rudimentarily, in all examined retailers. However, from a customers' perspective it is no entirely seamless shopping experience provided but the need for improvement in some KPI's according to the index.

In order to make a more significant statement about the omnichannel performance, further studies should analyze a higher number of fashion retailers availing this index. Since the technical progress steadily advances, the current state should be reexamined prior to applying the index and adjustments may be necessary. Further, it is beneficial to employ mystery shopper for this observation to avoid subjective influenced results.

The scope of the literature review shows that there is still enough room for further research on omnichannel. Many questions have not yet been answered and the omnichannel concept does not exist long enough to make concrete statements about which strategies have led to the largest company success or what idea actually led to an upturn in the retail sector. Several consulting companies, but also the NRF, dealt with the question: Is it already possible to measure the company's omnichannel performance? Several indices were created to allow assessment. Nevertheless, the performance of the companies was solely considered by experts from a suppliers' point of view. It would also be interesting to find out whether the desire to meet the increased customer expectations is also recognized by the customers themselves.

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## 7 Appendix

### 7.1 Appendix I

Table 4: List of literature search words including number of received results

Search words	Number of results received with scientific data bases at 'Lernzentrum'	Number of results received with Google	Number of results received with Google Scholar
Omnichannel	997	3,830,000	3,540
Omni channeling	8	108,000	18,800
Omnichannel shopping	258	560,000	2,110
Omnichannel performance	17	546,000	2,010
Omni channel retailing	208	444,000	4,600
Channel integration	20,401	113,000,000	3,380,000
Omnichannel index	-	1,400,000	1,110

<b>History of channel integration</b>	266	47,700,000	1,450,000
<b>Omnichannel challenges</b>	49	620,000	2,000
<b>Mystery shopping</b>	1,358	14,800,000	116,000
<b>Consumer behavior</b>	116,116,478	7,270,000	2,710,000
<b>Omnichannel customer behavior</b>	15	505,000	2,080
<b>Customer journey</b>	116,116,478	19,300,000	252,000
<b>Omnichannel customer journey</b>	6	737,000	917
<b>Change in customer behavior</b>	7,230	4,690,000	2,360,000

## 7.2 Appendix II

**Table 5: Omnichannel Index - Master Cube**

ID	Phase	KPI	WEIGHTING	SCORE_COS	SCORE_Levi's	SCORE_Hugo Boss	SCORE_Pull & Bear	WEIGHTED SCORE_COS	WEIGHTED SCORE_Levi's	WEIGHTED SCORE_Hugo Boss	WEIGHTED SCORE_Pull & Bear
1	Stimulation	Mobile-optimized website	2,2%	5	5	5	3	0,11	0,11	0,11	0,07
2	Stimulation	App for mobile device available	2,2%	0	0	5	5	0,00	0,00	0,11	0,11
3	Stimulation	Mobile-optimized e-mail	2,2%	5	5	5	5	0,11	0,11	0,11	0,11
4	Stimulation	Social media marketing / omnichannel marketing	2,2%	0	5	0	4	0,00	0,11	0,00	0,09
5	Stimulation	In-store signage about omnichannel services	2,2%	0	5	0	5	0,00	0,11	0,00	0,11
6	Search for Information	In-store availability is noted on website	1,5%	0	0	0	5	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,07
7	Search for Information	In-store availability is noted on app	1,5%	0	0	0	5	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,07
8	Search for Information	Ability to sort products on in-store availability	1,5%	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
9	Search for Information	Transparency on in-store availability in store closest to you	1,5%	0	0	0	5	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,07
10	Search for Information	In-store Wi-Fi availability	1,5%	5	0	0	0	0,07	0,00	0,00	0,00
11	Search for Information	Autocomplete feature in search engine	1,5%	0	0	5	5	0,00	0,00	0,07	0,07
12	Search for Information	Customer ratings displayed in search engine	1,5%	0	5	0	0	0,00	0,07	0,00	0,00
13	Search for Information	Faceted Navigation through product attributes	1,5%	5	5	5	3	0,07	0,07	0,07	0,04
14	Search for Information	Faceted Navigation through filter functions (e.g. product reviews)	1,5%	0	0	3	0	0,00	0,00	0,04	0,00
15	Search for Information	Stickers such as "exclusive", "web only" and "best seller"	1,5%	0	0	0	5	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,07
16	Search for Information	Customer Ratings on Products	1,5%	0	5	0	0	0,00	0,07	0,00	0,00
17	Search for Information	Product upsell advertisement	1,5%	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
18	Search for Information	Synchronization of prices and offers	1,5%	5	5	5	5	0,07	0,07	0,07	0,07
19	Search for Information	Mobile access to additional information about products in physical store	1,5%	0	0	0	5	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,07
20	Search for Information	Information sharing via social media	1,5%	5	5	5	5	0,07	0,07	0,07	0,07
21	Purchase Decision	Ability to purchase on mobile device (app and browser)	1,0%	3	3	5	5	0,03	0,03	0,05	0,05

22	Purchase Decision	Ability to edit product attributes in shopping cart	1,0%	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,05
23	Purchase Decision	Option to save shopping cart	1,0%	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,05
24	Purchase Decision	Transfer of saved shopping carts between channels	1,0%	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	0,00	0,05	0,05	0,05
25	Purchase Decision	Total cost breakdown	1,0%	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,05
26	Purchase Decision	Total cost breakdown (shipping included)	1,0%	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,05
27	Purchase Decision	Optional account creation (checkout)	1,0%	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,05
28	Purchase Decision	Edit product attributes (checkout)	1,0%	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,05
29	Purchase Decision	Omnichannel gift cards	1,0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,05
30	Purchase Decision	Possibility to order from online assortment from device in physical store	1,0%	0	0	0	0	0	3	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,03
31	Purchase Decision	Convenient payment	1,0%	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	0,02	0,05	0,05	0,05
32	Fulfillment - Delivery	Free shipping	3,2%	5	3	5	5	5	0	0,16	0,10	0,16	0,16	0,00
33	Fulfillment - Delivery	Multi-address shipping option	3,2%	0	5	5	5	5	5	0,00	0,16	0,16	0,16	0,16
34	Fulfillment - Delivery	Buy in store, ship at home	3,2%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
35	Fulfillment - Delivery	Buy online, pick up in store (BOPIS)	3,2%	0	3	5	5	5	5	0,00	0,10	0,16	0,16	0,16
36	Fulfillment - Delivery	BOPIS from mobile device	3,2%	0	3	5	5	5	5	0,00	0,10	0,16	0,16	0,16
37	Fulfillment - Delivery	Reserve online, buy in store	3,2%	0	0	0	0	0	5	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,16
38	Fulfillment - Delivery	Incentivized BOPIS	3,2%	0	0	0	0	0	5	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,16
39	Fulfillment - Return	Free return shipping	5,6%	5	5	5	5	5	5	0,28	0,28	0,28	0,28	0,28
40	Fulfillment - Return	Buy online, return in store (BORIS)	5,6%	0	0	0	0	0	5	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,28
41	Fulfillment - Return	BORIS available from mobile device	5,6%	0	0	0	0	0	5	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,28
42	Fulfillment - Return	Frictionless return in store (BORIS)	5,6%	0	0	0	0	0	5	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,28
43	Customer Service	Toll free phone number provided	0,9%	5	5	5	5	5	5	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,05
44	Customer Service	Customer service link in page header	0,9%	0	5	5	5	5	3	0,00	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,03
45	Customer Service	Customer service options noted in checkout	0,9%	0	3	5	5	5	5	0,00	0,03	0,05	0,05	0,05
46	Customer Service	Email support available	0,9%	5	5	5	5	5	5	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,05

47	Customer Service	Phone support available	0.9%	5	5	5	5	5	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
48	Customer Service	FAQs available	0.9%	5	5	5	5	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
49	Customer Service	Live chat available	0.9%	0	0	5	0	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.05	0.00
50	Customer Service	User generated Q&A for support	0.9%	0	0	0	5	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05
51	Customer Service	Mobile site click to call (customer service) available	0.9%	0	5	4	5	0.00	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.05
52	Customer Service	(In-store) staff offer to look for item online or in other store	0.9%	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
53	Customer Service	Social media service tool	0.9%	0	3	0	5	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.05
54	Customer Service	Omnichannel loyalty program	0.9%	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
								<b>1.49</b>	<b>2.30</b>	<b>2.40</b>	<b>3.96</b>	

Table 6: Omnichannel Index - Evaluation using Harvey Balls

ID	Phase	RPI	WEIGHTING	SCORE COS	SCORE Lev1's	SCORE Hugo Boss	SCORE Pull & Bear
1	Simulation	Mobile-optimized website	2.2%	5	5	5	5
2	Simulation	App for mobile device available	2.2%	0	0	5	5
3	Simulation	Mobile-optimized e-mail	2.2%	5	5	5	5
4	Simulation	Social media marketing / omnichannel marketing	2.2%	0	5	0	4
5	Simulation	In-store signage about omnichannel services	2.2%	0	5	0	5
6	Search for information	In-store availability is noted on website	1.5%	0	0	0	5
7	Search for information	In-store availability is noted on app	1.5%	0	0	0	5
8	Search for information	Ability to sort products on in-store availability	1.5%	0	0	0	0
9	Search for information	Transparency on in-store availability in store closest to you	1.5%	0	0	0	5
10	Search for information	In-store Wi-Fi availability	1.5%	5	0	0	0
11	Search for information	Autocomplete feature in search engine	1.5%	0	0	5	5
12	Search for information	Customer ratings displayed in search engine	1.5%	0	5	0	0
13	Search for information	Faceted Navigation through product attributes	1.5%	0	0	5	3
14	Search for information	Faceted Navigation through filter functions (e.g. product reviews)	1.5%	0	0	3	0
15	Search for information	Stickers such as "exclusive", "web only" and "best seller"	1.5%	0	0	0	5
16	Search for information	Customer Ratings on Products	1.5%	0	5	0	0
17	Search for information	Product upsell advertisement	1.5%	0	0	0	0
18	Search for information	Synchronisation of prices and offers	1.5%	5	0	0	5
19	Search for information	Mobile access to additional information about products in physical store	1.5%	0	0	0	5
20	Search for information	Information sharing via social media	1.5%	5	0	5	5
21	Purchase Decision	Ability to purchase on mobile device (app and browser)	1.0%	3	3	5	5
22	Purchase Decision	Ability to edit product attributes in shopping cart	1.0%	5	5	5	5
23	Purchase Decision	Option to save shopping cart	1.0%	5	5	5	5
24	Purchase Decision	Transfer of saved shopping carts between channels	1.0%	0	5	5	5
25	Purchase Decision	Total cost breakdown	1.0%	5	5	5	5
26	Purchase Decision	Total cost breakdown (shipping included)	1.0%	5	5	5	5
27	Purchase Decision	Optional account creation (checkout)	1.0%	5	5	5	5
28	Purchase Decision	Edit product attributes (checkout)	1.0%	5	5	5	5
29	Purchase Decision	Omnichannel giftcards	1.0%	0	0	0	5
30	Purchase Decision	Possibility to order from online assortment from device in physical store	1.0%	0	0	0	3
31	Purchase Decision	Convenient payment options	1.0%	2	5	5	5
32	Fulfillment - Delivery	Free shipping	3.2%	5	3	5	0
33	Fulfillment - Delivery	Multi-address shipping option	3.2%	0	5	5	5

