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Re-entering the Physical Space: Understanding Customer Experiences in Digital-Native Brand Stores

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Abstract

This study explores the evolving role of physical stores within an omnichannel landscape dominated by e-commerce. Focusing on digital-native brands, it investigates why consumers visit physical stores and how they experience them. Using Adoore's newly opened brand store in Gothenburg as a case to exemplify and contextualise the topic, the study reveals that emotional, practical, and symbolic factors shape both purchase decisions and brand perceptions. When the in-store environment aligns with the brand's digital identity, it enhances emotional connection and brand loyalty. Consumers value physical visits for sensory validation, inspiration, and social meaning, especially in the context of high-involvement purchases. These findings highlight the importance of emotional and experiential design in driving customer retention and advocacy across the customer journey. To gain these insights, the study applied a qualitative approach using semi-structured in-depth interviews with Generation Z consumers who had visited the store, allowing for rich, nuanced understanding of motivations and behaviors.

The study contributes to existing literature by integrating Emotional Experience Theory and Brand Experience Theory into Customer Journey Mapping, highlighting the crucial role of emotions in shaping omnichannel experiences. It identifies emotional and symbolic in-store experiences as key touchpoints that build or weaken brand trust and loyalty. Furthermore, it proposes a conceptual model that illustrates how emotional experiences mediate each stage of the journey: awareness, consideration, purchase, retention, and advocacy. These insights offer theoretical advancement in understanding the emotional dimension of omnichannel behavior and provide practical guidance for brands seeking to design emotionally resonant in-store experiences in a post-digital retail landscape.

Keywords: Retail, Omnichannel Retailing, Customer Journey Mapping,
Customer Experience, Emotional Experience, Brand Experience, In-store Experience.

Introduction

Background

This research began with an observation that an increasing number of successful digital-native brands, regardless of their progress in the growing e-commerce market, started opening up physical stores (McKinsey & Company, 2021). Digital companies such as *Adoore*, *Aim'n, CAIA*, *OneMileTheLabel*, and *Rhode*, only mentioning a few, started their journeys as digital natives and have since then seen great success. Recently they have established themselves in the traditional retail context opening up physical stores, such as temporary pop-up locations (Rhode, 2025) and permanent brand stores (Adoore, 2025; Aim'n, 2025; Nordström, 2024; OneMiletheLabel, 2025). Based on insights from social media and on-site observations, these stores seem to attract significant foot traffic and considerable customer interest. This study explores why these stores appeal to customers and how they shape the customer experience in the midst of a digital landscape and 'Retail Apocalypse'.

There is a reason the term 'Retail Apocalypse' has been widely used in recent years. Coined to describe the widespread and ongoing closure of physical retail stores, it is signaling a major shift in the retail landscape. This has been recognized by both scholars (Chun et al., 2023; Helm et al., 2020; Mende, 2019; Peterson, 2017) and practitioners (Begley & Coggins, 2023; Burns & Harris, 2022; Westfall, 2025), and is driven by multiple reasons. The starting point was the COVID-19 pandemic, during the years 2019-2022, leading to extended lockdowns (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.), but it is not the only reason. Rising inflation, increasing rents, and financial instability has also accelerated the shift toward online shopping (Giannone & Primiceri, 2024). Additionally, societal trends increasingly favor the adoption of digital solutions across various sectors, driven by technological advancements and changing consumer behaviors, which in turn accelerate the shift towards digital shopping in retail (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2020; OECD, 2020; Verhoef et al., 2021). Pearson (2017) highlighted this shift towards online commerce and changes in customer's preferences and needs and Helm et al. (2020) stated how this transformation requires an omnichannel approach, where retailers combine several touchpoints such as a digital website, social media platforms and physical retail spaces, to meet customer demands.

Due to omnichannel behavior customer journey mapping techniques used by companies and scholars have evolved significantly, reflecting the integration of online and offline channels, new digital touchpoints, and increasingly complex consumer behaviors (Hokkanen et al., 2020; Piauger, 2025; Truong, 2021; Westberg, 2022). For instance, recognizing webrooming (researching online before buying in-store) and showrooming (browsing in-store before purchasing online) (Bang et al., 2013, cited by Aiello et al., 2023). The reasons behind this intricate behavior are not always clear, but if there are perceived barriers or other triggers in different channel touch points this can hinder a seamless shopping experience, affect customer decision making and purchase intent (Alexander & Kent, 2022; Cai & Lo, 2020;

Cao & Li, 2018; Savastano et al., 2019; Srivastava & Thaichon, 2023). Thus, consumers' perceptions, feelings and thought-process play a significant role in the retail context (Helm et al., 2020).

Ultimately, as a consequence of the 'Retail Apocalypse', physical store networks have been reduced while greater efforts have been directed toward digital channels. Additionally, customer demand for online shopping is expected to increase (He, 2023; Helm et al., 2018; Sheth, 2021). On a global level, the e-commerce market is projected to grow at an annual rate of 8.02% over the next four years (CAGR 2025–2029) according to Statista (2025). This trend points to the increasing dominance of e-commerce, further challenging traditional brick-and-mortar retail. Sweden has the largest e-commerce market in the Nordics, with an estimated revenue of nearly $15 billion in 2025, compared to $9.7 billion in Norway, $8.9 billion in Denmark, and $7.1 billion in Finland (Statista, 2025). E-commerce in Sweden varies by demographics but is popular across all groups. Over seven million Swedes shop online, a number expected to surpass nine million by 2029 (Statista, 2025).

While this trend is acknowledged, a paradox has emerged in recent years as customers increasingly return to physical retail environments, showing a renewed interest in physical stores (McKinsey & Company, 2022). This shift highlights the enduring value of physical retail in shaping customer experiences (Katz, 2024; Palaci et al., 2019) which can be one of the reasons why an increased number of digital native brands are moving into physical retail spaces (McKinsey & Company, 2021). Digital native brands are unique in having established their brand and customer relationships exclusively online, allowing them to develop deeper insights into customer preferences and behaviors. This makes their initiatives to extend their omnichannel strategy to the physical environment, launching store concepts that seem to appeal to their customers, an important and interesting area of study. This also emphasizes the significance of customer experiences within the retail context (Avery, 2019; Helm, 2023; Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; McKinsey & Company, 2021; Palaci et al., 2019).

Problematization

Previous research has examined the changing nature of customer behavior within the omnichannel retail context (Bascur & Rusu, 2020; Beck & Rygl, 2015; Gerea et al., 2021; Verhoef et al., 2015; Verhoef et al., 2007). Much of this literature has focused on purchase intentions (Blom et al., 2017; Gabisch & Gewbu, 2011) and channel choices (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022; Xu & Jackson, 2019; Zhao & Deng, 2020), highlighting the need to further explore customers intentions across different channel touchpoints. This makes the study of Customer Experience (CX) particularly relevant, as it captures how customers perceive and interact with a brand throughout these touchpoints (Lemon & Verhoef, 2009). Becker and Jaakkola (2020) emphasize understanding CX as a holistic process spanning multiple touchpoints and moments. Since CX centers on customer behavior, including decision-making and purchase intentions, Customer Journey Mapping (CJM) is frequently used in this context (Chang & Li, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022).

The topic of CX has gained a lot of attention during the past decade in both marketing research and practice (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). Marketing scholars even discuss it as the fundamental basis for marketing management (Homburg et al., 2017; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) introduced the experiential aspects of consumption, emphasizing that consumption is not only rational but also an experiential process filled with fantasies, emotions, and enjoyment, and their research has heavily influenced later CX research, especially in retail contexts where emotional and sensory aspects are important. A clear understanding of what Customer Experience is has not been defined (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). Some researchers argue that CX reflects what the brand is offering (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), while others define it as the customers' reactions when interacting with the brand (Homburg et al., 2017; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Meyer & Schwager, 2007). From ordinary and routine experiences (Carú & Cova, 2003) to the most extraordinary (Arnould & Price, 1993), this concept has been used to capture all kinds of experiences. Verhoef et al. (2009) is one of several researchers who delimited the scope of Customer Experiences to the retail context. In line with this, Gerea and Herskovic (2022) highlighted the importance of customer-centricity for developing successful omnichannel retail strategies. Focusing specifically on omnichannel retail, Zhang et al. (2024) found that personalization may enhance the hedonic experience, while connectivity, defined as the technological and informational linkages between channels, such as online and offline, can support the utilitarian experience. Furthermore, Zhang et al. (2024) noted that both hedonic and utilitarian dimensions are important for customer loyalty, and that CX can serve as a mediator between omnichannel functions, design elements, and loyalty outcomes.

Quantitative methods have traditionally dominated the CX field (Fisher et al, 2019; Zhang et al., 2024; Aversa et al., 2021) whereas this does not capture the deeper insights of the customer's minds and their lived experiences and emotions. In recent years, there has been a growing interest to use qualitative approaches in this field, offering more nuanced insights into the Customer Experience topic. For instance, Blom et al. (2021) suggested that studies using qualitative approaches or alternative theoretical perspectives could significantly enrich the field. Incorporating qualitative insights is essential to bridge existing gaps and gain a deeper understanding of the drivers behind customer behavior (Caruelle et al., 2024; Märtin et al., 2023). In line with this, the researchers of this article argue that exploring customers' thoughts and feelings can yield valuable contributions to the field. Accordingly, this study adopts a Customer Experience (CX) perspective that emphasizes the sensations, emotions, motivations and drivers that customers experience when interacting with product offerings, the store environment, and personal engagement, aspects that collectively influence consumer behavior, purchase decisions, and perceptions of both the brand and the physical store.

In conclusion, there is a clear need to delve into customers' actual, lived experiences within omnichannel retail contexts, and to use qualitative methods to investigate *why* customers behave the way they do, rather than solely examining what they do or how they do it (Blom et al., 2021; Herrero-Crespo et al., 2021). This study aims to explore customers subjectively interpreted in-store experiences when visiting a digital native brands' physical store. By exploring emotional and situational nuances often overlooked in survey-based or conceptual

research, the study seeks a richer understanding of why consumers continue to value physical retail spaces despite the rise of e-commerce and widespread store closures. Recognizing the consumer perspective is crucial to understanding the ongoing relevance of these stores in a shifting retail landscape.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore how consumers experience and perceive the role of physical stores operated by digital native brands within an omnichannel retail environment. Focusing on consumer experiences in a physical store opened by a digital native brand, this study seeks to understand how such stores create value for customers in an increasingly digital retail landscape. As e-commerce continues to dominate and many traditional stores close, the move by digitally born brands into physical retail presents an intriguing development. By examining how consumers perceive and engage with these new store formats, the study aims to shed light on the motivations behind store visits and the experiential elements that contribute to their appeal.

To fulfill this purpose, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. *How are consumers experiencing store concepts launched by digital-native brands?*
2. *Why do consumers choose to visit digital native brand's stores instead of their websites?*

Building on the work of Blom et al. (2021) and Herrero-Crespo et al. (2021), this study addresses an existing gap by examining the psychological, emotional, and social drivers that shape consumer behavior throughout the customer journey, with a particular focus on emotional experiences in-store. This study contributes to the literature on Customer Journey Mapping and Customer Experience in retail by moving beyond observed behavior to explore the underlying experiences and emotions that shape consumer actions.

Furthermore, this study builds on prior research on store design and retail experience (Doung et al., 2022; Hagtvedt, 2023; Servais et al., 2022) by examining not only consumers' in-store perceptions but also their pre-visit expectations and post-visit reflections and behaviors. This approach allows us to explore how pre-existing brand perceptions influence store visit motivation, how the store is experienced, and how the visit shapes post-visit behaviors and the consumer's relationship with the brand. By situating these insights within the broader Customer Journey Map (CJM) framework, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the consumer journey, with particular attention to emotional in-store experiences and their implications for brand engagement.

The following chapter presents the Theoretical Framework, using Customer Journey Mapping as the overarching model, and incorporating Emotional Experience Theory and Brand Experience Theory to conceptualize the underlying drivers and emotions influencing customer decisions. The Methodology chapter also details the case selection which serves to exemplify and contextualize the data collection the interview design, and the analytical approach. This is followed by a combined presentation of the Empirical Findings and Analysis, organized according to the thematic categories identified during the coding process.

The analysis begins by exploring respondents' identity and brand awareness, then progresses to shopping behavior, and then delves deeper into the stages of the Customer Journey Map, with a particular focus on the lived experiences and emotions during the store visit, interpreted through the lens of the theoretical framework. The last chapter offers Conclusions and Theoretical Contributions, discusses Managerial Implications, and suggests directions for Future Research.

Theoretical Framework

The Theoretical Framework consists of Customer Journey Mapping used as an umbrella theory, followed by Emotional Experience and Brand Experience Theory.

Customer Journey Mapping

Customer Journey Mapping (CJM) is a theoretical framework developed to understand how customers interact with a brand across various stages and touchpoints. It provides organizations with valuable insights into consumer behaviors, motivations, and preferences by visually structuring the customer behavior in a comprehensive manner (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Rosenbaum et al., 2017). Richardson (2010), in the *Harvard Business Review*, presented a practical application of customer journey mapping within a corporate context. He demonstrated how organizations can enhance customer experience by mapping the specific steps customers take when engaging with a brand. Richardson (2010) emphasized that customer journey maps can encompass the entire customer lifecycle or concentrate on individual interactions, highlighting the importance of addressing customer expectations, emotional responses, and potential obstacles at each stage.

CJM functions not only as a descriptive tool but also as an analytical method that uncovers customer challenges and opportunities for improvement throughout the customer journey (Marquez et al., 2015; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011). By outlining key stages, actions, and feelings associated with each interaction, the CJM helps companies improve the customer journey by making it more seamless, efficient, and emotionally engaging (Croiser & Handford, 2012; Farquhar & Rowley, 2009). This is particularly relevant in both digital and physical retail contexts (Gielens, 2022; Hokkanen et al., 2020), where customer expectations are shaped by convenience (Farquhar & Rowley, 2009), ambiance, and service quality (Singh, 2019; Hänninen et al., 2019).

The customer journey is often divided into five core stages: *awareness*, *consideration*, *purchase*, *retention*, and *advocacy* (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). While these stages offer a useful structure, it is important to note that the customer journey is not linear. Instead, it is characterized by complex, dynamic interactions across various channels (Neslin et al., 2006; Pucinelli et al., 2009). Furthermore, Marquez et al. (2015) argue that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to journey mapping, as each customer's own experience is shaped by individual needs, preferences, and contextual factors. As a result, knowledge is still lacking regarding the underlying motivations behind specific customer behaviors (Marquez et al., 2015).

In this study, the CJM framework is applied from a customer-centric perspective to examine the physical retail environment and understand how consumers navigate the journey before, during, and after a store visit. Although CJM has traditionally been used by retailers to optimize touchpoints (Grewal & Roggeveen, 2020; Rosenbaum et al., 2017), it also serves as a valuable lens for interpreting consumer behavior more deeply. The study adopts CJM as an umbrella framework, enhanced by supporting theories around emotional experiences, in order to produce a nuanced and qualitative understanding of the drivers behind consumer actions in a physical store context.

This research article focuses specifically on the customer journey within physical retail, aiming to investigate the consumer's motivations and expectations before visiting the store, their behaviors and decision-making during the visit, and their reflections and intentions after completing the purchase. By employing CJM in this manner, the study adopts a holistic and in-depth approach to the framework, emphasizing the customer's perspective.

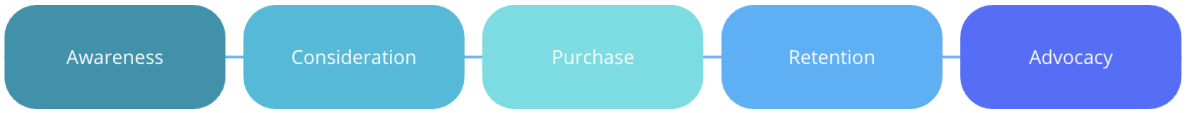

Figure 1. Customer Journey Map, created by the authors of this article (Johansson & Krantz, 2025). This model is based on prior academic and traditional Customer Journey Map frameworks (Blackwell et al., 2006; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Lemon & Verhoef; 2016).

Awareness

The first stage of the Customer Journey Map is the Awareness stage, also referred to as the pre-purchase phase (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Here an initial interest emerges, such as a need, goal, or impulse, that leads the customer to begin seeking a product or service as a potential solution. In retail contexts, this may entail being exposed to marketing, social media, word-of-mouth, or simply encountering a store through location or visual stimuli. Understanding this stage from a customer-centric perspective is crucial, as it allows researchers and retailers to explore the underlying emotions, motivations, and contextual factors that influence why and how customers choose to engage further (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Consideration

The Consideration stage includes all the stages before the actual purchase, it can be an intricate process, traditionally including need recognition, information-seeking and deliberation (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). For instance, visiting a store may not be equivalent to making a purchase, it could be a part of information seeking. The need recognition starts when the customer identifies a need through internal influence, for example thirst, or external influence, for example a commercial ad (Blackwell et al., 2006; Kotler & Keller, 2012). The need arises when there is a gap between the customers current circumstances and the desired circumstances, if the dissonance between the two is significant, a purchase will likely be

made. This explains how advertisement can rouse new needs that customers did not know they had to begin with (Solomon et al., 2013). Moreover, Wolny and Charoensuksai (2014) recognises how in a digitalized society the need recognition is near to a constant state in customer's minds since they are exposed to an overload of information, therefore it can also be viewed as a phase of inspiration or browsing the market (Wolny & Charoensuksai, 2014). Once a need is recognized, the information seeking begins, either through heightened attention or through determined information search (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

The most common acts of information seeking are Word-of-Mouth (such as recommendations from friends and family), search engine browsing, online customer reviews, website comparison, and social media (Ashman et al., 2015; Wolny & Charoensuksai, 2014). The information seeking process has during recent years shifted from professional sources to information from user generated content, influencers, social media etc (Park & Cho, 2012; Wolny & Mueller, 2013). Webrooming and Showrooming occurs in this stage too, as part of the information seeking process, showrooming browsing in-store but buying online, while webrooming is researching online and purchasing in-store (Jing, 2018). Guan et al. (2021) suggests that for high involvement products the Webrooming and Showrooming behavior is more occurring than for low involvement products. Furthermore, Dahana et al. (2018) found that involvement and price consciousness significantly influence Showrooming behavior. Highly involved consumers information-search in stores to reduce risks, while price-conscious shoppers prefer browsing online for cheaper options (Dahana et al., 2018).

Purchase

The Purchase stage represents the moment of transaction, encompassing all interactions between the customer and the brand within the purchasing environment (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). This phase involves critical behaviors such as selecting products, placing orders and completing the payments. Research in retail and consumer behavior has long highlighted the importance of the shopping experience. Recently, however, the increase of touchpoints and the risk of information overload have elevated the significance of aspects such as choice overload, purchase confidence, and decision satisfaction in shaping the overall customer experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). For a seamless purchase experience, choosing products should be easy and time-efficient. Therefore, accessibility is key, along with convenient payment methods, fast delivery, easy returns, and reliable customer service (Farquhar & Rowley, 2009). Social media and online word-of-mouth significantly influence purchase decisions (Prasad et al., 2019; Qi & Kuik, 2022; Singh, 2019). Additionally, consumers often make unplanned purchases (Wang et al., 2019). Also, stores are offering engaging and social experiences that go beyond the actual shopping (Gielens, 2022; Helm et al., 2020). Consumers prefer physical stores for their social and emotional aspects, where they can try out and feel the material of the products, such as clothing, interact with others, discover new items and experience a sense of nostalgia (Helm et al., 2020).

Additionally, a store's location plays a crucial role and significantly influences consumer behavior (McArthur, 2015). Consumers prefer convenience and a store should offer a wide

product range and convenient opening hours (Farquhar & Rowley, 2009; Hokkanen et al., 2020).

Retention

The retention stage refers to the post-purchase phase in which companies aim to maintain an ongoing relationship with the customer. This stage involves strategies and experiences designed to encourage repeat visits and future purchases, while also encompassing the customer's evaluation of the product or service acquired. During this period, consumers assess whether their expectations have been met, which in turn influences their satisfaction, loyalty, and likelihood of continued engagement with the brand (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Understanding retention is crucial to create customer loyalty (Oh et al., 2020), as it reduces the likelihood of consumers switching to competing brands or products. By examining how consumers evaluate their purchases after the transaction, companies can identify factors that influence satisfaction and enhance customer retention (Mugge et al., 2010).

The relationship between product attachment and satisfaction, and how factors such as the product's utility, appearance and memories influence consumers' emotional bond with products after the purchase. Additionally, the brand plays a significant role in how consumers think during the post-purchase stage (Mugge et al., 2010).

Ultimately, the customer journey is important to understand in relation to omnichannel strategy because it shows the customer's motivation to behave in a certain way. This is connected to this study's consumer interviews, enabling to map out the motivations to visit physical stores.

Advocacy

The Advocacy Stage is a unique form of positive word-of-mouth communication (Sweeney et al., 2020). Advocacy is characterized by customers actively supporting and promoting a brand to others. Unlike general word-of-mouth, advocacy is marked by its strength, passion and explicit intent aiming to positively influence others' perceptions and decisions (Sweeney et al., 2020). Brand advocacy refers to consumers' tendency to actively support and speak positively about a brand, for example by recommending it to others, trying new products, and spreading positive word-of-mouth while also remaining loyal in the face of negative incidents (Bubphapant & Brandão, 2023; Pai et al., 2015). These consumers act as defenders of the brand, expressing their support openly and with enthusiasm (Bubphapant & Brandão, 2023; Wilk et al., 2020). In today's digital landscape, such advocacy frequently takes place on social media platforms (Sashi et al., 2019), where interactions between consumers emerge through shares, comments and discussions (Bubphapant & Brandão, 2023; Coursaris et al., 2013). This stage also highlights the importance of creating strong customer relationships to encourage advocacy behaviors (Lawer & Knox, 2006; Sweeney et al., 2020).

To understand why consumers behave the way they do, we have chosen to delve into theories within customer experience, specifically Emotional Experience Theory and Brand Experience, as they relate to consumer interactions within brand stores.

Emotional Experience Theory

In recent years, consumer research has increasingly emphasized the experiential and emotional dimensions of consumption, moving beyond the traditional view of customers as rational decision-makers (Carlsson & Nilsson, 2017). According to Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), consumption is a multisensory, symbolic, and emotional process where feelings, fantasies, and fun often take precedence over utilitarian logic. Their work shifted the focus in consumer research from cognition to affect, in order to understand shopping as a deeply emotional and symbolic activity (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Levy, 1959). In line with this, Bagozzi et al. (1999) argue that emotions influence nearly every stage of the consumer decision-making process, from the need for recognition and evaluation of alternatives to post-purchase satisfaction and loyalty.

Positive emotional experiences such as excitement, inspiration, or a sense of comfort can strengthen consumer-brand relationships, enhance satisfaction, and increase purchase intention (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Brakus et al., 2009). On the other hand, if a consumer gets negative emotions with a brand, it can lead to avoidance behavior and weaken the customer relationship (Bagozzi el., 1999; Gatautis & Pilelienė, 2019).

Brakus et al. (2009) further support this perspective by introducing the concept of Brand Experience, where emotional, sensory, and behavioral responses to brand-related stimuli directly affect consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Their findings suggest that emotions are not only valuable in the moment but also influence memory formation and long-term brand perceptions, which is essential in competitive retail environments.

In the context of omnichannel retailing, Emotional Experience Theory becomes particularly relevant when comparing online and offline channels. While e-commerce may offer convenience and efficiency (Farquhar & Rowley, 2009), physical stores offer the potential for emotionally rich experiences that engage the senses and create a deeper psychological connection with the brand (Gielens, 2022; Helm et al., 2020). For digital-native brands, which extend into physical retail spaces, the emotional dimension of the customer experience is central to explain the physical presence and creating added value beyond the functional value.

By applying Emotional Experience Theory to this study, we gain a deeper understanding of why customers may choose to visit a physical store even when online options are readily available. The theory helps explain how emotional expectations shape pre-visit intentions, and how in-store experiences influence purchase behavior.

Brand Experience Theory

Brand experience refers to consumers' subjective and behavioral responses to brand-related stimuli and encompasses four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral (Bae & Kim, 2023). Brakus et al. (2009) also highlights the social dimension of a brand experience. The sensory dimension refers to how the brand engages senses such as sight, sound, smell, taste and touch (Brakus et al., 2009), and here, physical stores' environments play a crucial role in order to affect these senses. Colors and designs can also create feelings and thoughts of a brand and the brand experience are affecting the consumer behavior (Brakus et al., 2009; Mazid, 2023).

The affective dimension refers to the emotions and associations a brand evokes. These brand associations are shaped by how consumers remember and emotionally connect with a brand, which distinguishes it from its competitors (Jeon & Baeck, 2016). Brand associations are formed when consumers store information in their memory about what the brand represents, whether it's a general perception or specific product-related details (Ari-Matti et al., 2021). For example, Volvo has effectively communicated the message of safety and reliability, and many consumers associate their cars with these qualities. These associations are crucial in decision-making, as they guide how consumers process, retrieve, and organize information, ultimately influencing their behavior (French & Smith, 2013). Associations can therefore influence whether consumers want to visit stores or not, according to their previous associations to the brand.

The intellectual experience is a process that involves cognitive processing and reasoning, which distinguishes it from sensory, emotional and behavioral dimensions (Pinker, 1999). The dimension focuses on how the brand engages the consumer's thinking and reasoning, rather than measuring specific thoughts or cognitive tasks (Brakus et al., 2009).

The behavioral aspect of brand experience refers to how consumers act and interact with a brand in response to various brand-related stimuli. Behavioral responses are part of this experience and can include actions and interactions that occur in connection with the brand, regardless of whether the consumer is aware of them or not. Moreover, the behavioral aspects of brand experience can take place both with and without the direct consumption of the product or service (Brakus et al., 2009). For example, smartphones are transforming not only store design and product placement but also the overall shopping experience and the relationship between retailers and consumers (Fuentes et al., 2017). By enabling price comparisons, access to product information and alternative choices, consumers become active participants in the retail environment. It is no longer solely store staff who shape the shopping environment, consumers themselves influence and interact with stores, redefining retail experiences and customer engagement (Fuentes et al., 2017).

Brands can also create social experiences, which can bring the feeling of relating to a group (Brakus et al., 2009). Consumers desire to feel part of a group or community, actively engaging and participating in something. Brands that cultivate a strong sense of community and involvement in cultural traditions are perceived as authentic (Beverland & Farrely, 2010).

Brand communities are social groups built on shared values, interests, and norms, creating a strong bond between members. These communities develop when people connect over common interests related to a brand or consumption activities, creating a sense of belonging and identity. By engaging in these communities, consumers actively contribute to the brand's culture and significance (Kornberger, 2010).

Brand experience has become a central focus in marketing, as understanding how consumers experience a brand is crucial for developing effective strategies. Brand experiences occur throughout the entire customer journey, from product search and purchase to consumption and service interactions (Brakus et al., 2009), which makes this theory relevant for this study since it can explain why consumers are visiting stores and what value it creates. Research shows that a strong brand experience can create feelings of love and loyalty toward a brand, ultimately contributing to increased market share and profitability for the company (Bae & Kim, 2023).

Product experience occurs when consumers interact with products, either directly through physical contact or indirectly through advertisements, which influences product evaluation, attitudes and purchase intentions. Shopping and service experiences focus on interactions with store environments and staff, where factors like atmosphere and salespeople impact the customers feelings and attitudes toward the brand. Consumption experiences take place when using a product and involve both functional and hedonic aspects, such as emotions and enjoyment. Although, brand experience differs from product experience because it is triggered by brand-related stimuli, such as colors, shapes, slogans and environments where the brand is exposed. It encompasses sensory, emotional, cognitive and behavioral responses. Brand experience is a direct response to specific stimuli and can occur both consciously and unconsciously (Brakus et al., 2009).

This concept is highly relevant to this study because it offers a comprehensive understanding of brand experience, a key concept in exploring consumer motivations to visit physical stores, especially those established by digital-native brands. The four dimensions of brand experience: sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral, provide valuable insights into how consumers interact with a brand in both online and offline settings.

Methodology

The methodology builds on a qualitative approach, combining in-depth interviews and thematic analysis to gain rich insights into consumer experiences and behaviors.

Qualitative Approach

In this study, we used a qualitative research approach to find more detailed explanations and deeper understandings (David & Sutton, 2016; Granth-Smith & Osborne, 2021) of customer experiences. Moreover, the qualitative approach aligned well with our research objective of understanding the deeper experiences (Granth-Smith & Osborne, 2021) such as emotions and sensations, that drive consumer behaviors (Patton, 2015; Söderbom & Ulvenblad, 2016). Patton (2015) described that the qualitative method "studies, documents, analyses, and interprets how human beings construct and attach meanings to their experiences" (Patton, 2015, p.13), thus qualitative research has a more humanistic focus (Gephart, 2004, p. 455) which allowed us to capture the subjective experiences and thought processes of consumers (David & Sutton, 2016). By listening to personal stories from consumers and understanding the reasons behind their choices, a qualitative approach allowed us to capture the complexity of consumers' behaviors in ways that quantitative methods would not do.

To immerse ourselves in the research field, we reviewed relevant literature on Omnichannel Retailing, Customer Journey Mapping, Customer Experience, Emotional Experience, and Brand Experience. This prior research deepened our understanding of the subject (Söderbom & Ulvenblad, 2016) and broadened our insights. We identified relevant scientific articles through well-established academic databases, including Scopus and the Gothenburg University Library, which provided access to peer-reviewed and credible sources. To ensure a structured and methodical approach, we carefully selected and categorized articles based on their relevance to our study. This process involved grouping them by topic and author, allowing us to identify key themes, trends, and differing perspectives within the literature. By organizing the data in this way, we were able to establish a coherent framework for our analysis and ensure that our research was grounded in existing knowledge while also identifying potential gaps that our study could address.

According to David and Sutton (2016), there are some ethical challenges that often arise in research. Qualitative research typically involves close interaction with people, meaning researchers must be aware of the potential impacts their studies may have on participants' privacy and rights. As we were conducting a qualitative study involving participants' insights and personal experiences, we were fully committed to upholding ethical standards throughout the research process. This included ensuring informed consent, maintaining the confidentiality of participants' responses, and protecting their privacy. It was important that the participants felt comfortable and confident that their contributions would be handled with respect and discretion. Ethical considerations are integral to our approach, ensuring that our findings are both credible and responsibly gathered. Additionally, we made sure that the participants had the opportunity to share their perspectives on the phenomenon being studied

without being influenced by predefined concepts or the researcher's assumptions (Azungah, 2018).

Selection Case

To contextualize and illustrate the study's focus on customer experience, a case example was selected featuring the Swedish fashion brand Adoore and its recently opened physical store in Gothenburg (Rönnlund, 2024). This case provides a relevant lens through which to examine the broader relationship between digital-native brands and physical retail, as well as customer perceptions and interactions with these spaces. While Adoore is used to frame the study, the primary focus lies on customer experiences, before, during, and after the store visit. Adoore, a Swedish digital-native fashion brand, recently transitioned into physical retail, making it a suitable case to exemplify the research subject. Adoore first opened a store in Stockholm, followed by the launch of a second store in Gothenburg on February 28, 2025 (Adoore, 2025; Rönnlund, 2024). The brand states a relevant example for the purpose of this research, as they started as an e-commerce brand who have now opened up permanent stores. It is intriguing to observe how it will perform in Gothenburg, a city where other traditional retailers have struggled to sustain their presence (Piauger, 2025; Dagens Handel, 2025). We selected Adoore as a case brand based on its relevance to our research topic, without any affiliation or promotional intent. This approach, along with our ethical research practices, ensured objectivity and respect for participants' rights while contributing responsibly to the understanding of consumer behavior.

From our observations on social media, especially on TikTok and Instagram, Adoore flourishes as a popular brand among female Gen Z consumers. With the brand's newly opened store location being in Gothenburg city (Rönnlund, 2024), it represents an ideal city for us to conduct our research. Furthermore, selecting a high-end brand like Adoore helped us look at purchase behavior related to high involvement products. According to Dahana et al. (2018) high-involvement products are more likely to impact the customer's decision-making process in an omnichannel context and trigger complex behaviors such as webrooming and showrooming. Higher-priced products typically involve greater consumer deliberation, encouraging information search across multiple channels before a final buying decision is made (Dahana et al., 2018) therefore it created an interesting case for us to base our data collection on.

Sampling Strategy and Participant Selection

Adoore produces female clothes, and overall, females tend to do more shopping for clothes and accessories compared to men (Statista, 2023), justifying why we have delimited our selection group to only females. To narrow our scope to a specific age group, we chose to focus on Generation Z, as this group has shown significant engagement with Adoore on social media and digital platforms. Additionally, Generation Z is a tech-savvy consumer group with distinct shopping behaviors aligning with those we wanted to investigate further in this research. They also engage digitally and use several platforms when shopping (Arizal et al., 2024; Ayuni, n.d.), and are very likely to engage in webrooming and showrooming behavior (Truong, 2021) where they engage with brands, share their experiences, and seek

inspiration. Therefore, we have defined Gen Z as our selection group for this study. Additionally, we have observed that this age group will frequently visit physical stores, despite being a digitally native generation according to a survey conducted by the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), Generation Z consumers engage in in-store shopping at a frequency comparable to that of their Baby Boomer grandparents (ICSC, 2023). Understanding their motivations for choosing physical stores over online shopping provides valuable insights into modern consumer behavior.

	Selection Criteria	Description
1	Age Group	Generation Z (born between 1996 to 2010) (McKinsey & Company, 2024).
2	Gender	Female
3	Brand Familiarity	Familiar with Adoore (purchase, store visit, explored the website or engaged with social media)
4	Store Visit	Visited the Adoore Brand Store in Gothenburg

Table 1. Presents the selection criteria for choosing our respondents.

This narrowed selection ensured that the participants had the necessary experience and familiarity with Adoore's brand and its omnichannel approach, thereby it allowed us to gather relevant and meaningful data for the study.

We carefully considered ethical aspects in our sampling method and participant selection. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time, ensuring voluntary participation and informed consent. We maintained confidentiality and anonymity by not sharing identifiable information beyond the study, protecting participants' privacy.

Respondent	Gender	Age	Residence	Adoore Brand Store Visitor	Date
1	Female	26	Stockholm	Yes	2025-03-26
2	Female	23	Gothenburg	Yes	2025-03-24
3	Female	26	Gothenburg	Yes	2025-03-24
4	Female	22	Gothenburg	Yes	2025-03-26

5	Female	28	Gothenburg	Yes	2025-03-27
6	Female	24	Gothenburg	Yes	2025-03-27
7	Female	24	Gothenburg	Yes	2025-03-28
8	Female	24	Gothenburg	Yes	2025-04-03
9	Female	23	Gothenburg	Yes	2025-04-01
10	Female	22	Halmstad	Yes	2025-04-03
11	Female	23	Gothenburg	Yes	2025-04-04
12	Female	23	Gothenburg	Yes	2025-04-04
13	Female	25	Gothenburg	Yes	2025-04-24

Table 2. Presents the interviewees included in the study, each anonymized.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The data collection for our research was conducted through qualitative and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. We used open-ended questions to allow a more fluent and less restricted conversation. As stated by Granth-Smith and Osborne (2021) and Söderblom and Ulvenblad (2016), semi-structured interviews offer a flexible and structured approach for data collection, enabling respondents to elaborate on and expand their responses while having an interview guide to lead the conversation forward and make sure nothing important is left out.

We designed 29 open-ended interview questions to capture detailed insights on consumer motivations and behaviors. The number of questions was chosen to balance comprehensiveness with manageability, allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring consistency across all interviews. The questions were crafted to align with our theoretical framework, covering areas such as pre-purchase motivations, in-store experiences, and post-purchase reflections. Throughout the process, we also observed participants' body language and non-verbal cues for signs of emotions such as uncertainty or discomfort (David & Sutton, 2016), which offered additional insight into their level of confidence and engagement with the topic.

Furthermore, open-ended questions allowed us to prepare questions beforehand in an interview scheme following a specific order, which we could use to structure the discussion, keeping it on track and leading the conversation forward. Thus, the interviewee could answer in their own words leaving some room for follow-up questions on aspects that we felt necessary or interesting to further investigate. We carefully designed our interview questions to avoid yes-or-no answers and leading questions that could steer participants toward a specific response. This approach encouraged participants to provide more detailed and

reflective responses, allowing for deeper insights into their motivations and behaviors. Additionally, by using open-ended questions, we aimed to create a more natural and engaging conversation while minimizing the risk of influencing their answers. This is a well-known approach for conducting qualitative research (Alvehus, 2013; Patel & Davidson, 2003). We gained rich, descriptive insights by choosing this approach (Granth-Smith & Osborne, 2021), which enabled us to examine not only what consumers do but also why they make certain choices. This, in turn, allowed us to build on previous research and provide new insights valuable for understanding the customer journey and customer behaviors in the retail context (Azungah, 2018). The interview guide that we used can be found in Appendix 1.

To gather participants for our interviews we initially recruited people at the Adoore store in Gothenburg by inviting them to take part in our study. To further expand our sample, we used a snowball sampling technique (Emerson, 2015; Marcus et al., 2017), asking interviewees if they were accompanied by others or knew other individuals who had recently visited the store. While participants were recruited in person, all interviews were carried out remotely via Microsoft Teams to ensure flexibility and convenience for the participants. This format also allowed for each interview to be recorded, with participants' consent, which enabled us to revisit the sessions during the analysis.

A total of 13 interviews were conducted before data saturation was reached. After observing repetitive responses and that no new information emerged, we still conducted some additional interviews to ensure all relevant perspectives were captured. We reached data saturation when common patterns began to consistently emerge across interviews, and no new themes or insights were identified despite continued data collection. (David & Sutton, 2016; Granth-Smith & Osborne, 2021). Both the recordings of the interviews and their transcriptions were then used to support the results and analysis, ensuring that all relevant information was accurately captured and considered.

Throughout the entire interview collection process, we ensured that an ethical framework was followed. This involved getting participants' permission to take part, protecting their privacy and confidentiality by keeping their names anonymous, and managing the data in a clear and responsible way (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). All respondents were asked to sign a consent form, granting us permission to use their responses in this research. This process ensured that their participation and data were used with informed consent, in accordance with ethical guidelines and research standards.

Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data, we conducted a systematic and iterative process involving transcription, coding and thematic analysis and theoretical interpretation. This approach allowed us to identify patterns and themes while ensuring a rigorous connection between our empirical findings and our theoretical framework.

The transcription from the interviews allowed us to capture insights in real time, reducing the risk of recall bias and ensuring a more accurate representation of participants' responses. Alongside transcription, we engaged in an ongoing analysis by coding the interviews for

recurring themes. The interviews were manually coded using color-coded categories in a shared document, which allowed for a collaborative process of comparison and validation of interpretations. The color-coded categories used were: *Identity*, *Brand Awareness*, *Shopping Behavior*, and the *Customer Journey Stages; before*, *during* and *after* the store visit. These themes were then used to structure the results and analysis section.

Quality and Trustworthiness

We chose to evaluate the quality of our research using the concept of trustworthiness, which is considered more suitable for qualitative research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness consists of four key criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Throughout our research process, we ensured dependability by following a clear and structured approach. We documented each step carefully, making sure our methods were logical and easy to track. This way, we wanted to make sure that anyone reviewing our work can see how we reached our conclusions. To ensure transferability, we explained our findings in the context of the theoretical framework. While our study is unique, we identified patterns, demonstrating its relevance in broader contexts. For credibility, we emerged ourselves in previous literature and news articles in order to be well-informed about the topic. We gathered enough data to support our claims and we carefully linked our observations to meaningful theories and previous literature to ensure that our conclusions made sense. By maintaining a logical main thread, we aimed to facilitate for other researchers to follow our reasoning and see the validity of our findings. Finally, we focused on confirmability by ensuring our interpretations were based on actual data and not personal opinions. We provided clear links between our findings and the evidence, making it easy for others to understand how we derived conclusions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Additionally, we made sure that we only used peer-reviewed scientific articles for our theoretical framework in order to maintain relevance and credibility.

Additionally, we actively practiced reflexivity, that is, we continuously reflected on our own assumptions, preconceptions, and potential biases to minimize their influence on the interpretation of the data. During transcription, we handled the data with care and integrity, ensuring that no personal or identifying information was shared or misused. All participants' responses were anonymized to protect their privacy. Through continuous self-reflection, ethical data handling, and transparency, we ensured that our research upheld practices essential to establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010; Nowell et al., 2017). Together, they strengthened the credibility and confirmability of our analysis, allowing us to represent participants' perspectives accurately and responsibly, in line with academic research standards.

Ultimately, our focus was on gathering in-depth insights, which means rather than focusing on collecting a certain amount of respondents, we focused on gathering new insights. The aim was never to represent the entire population, but to provide knowledge in our research area that builds upon previous research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

Results of Empirical Data & Analysis

The Results and Analysis section follows the structure of the thematic analysis, beginning with identity and brand awareness, then shopping behavior, and finally diving into the customer journey mapping and emotional experiences.

Understanding Identity and Self-Expression

The respondents, aged 22 to 28 and mostly based in Gothenburg, view clothing as an important means of expressing their identity. Even those less engaged in fashion still show understanding for how their style reflects who they are. This connection between personal image and clothing becomes evident early in the customer journey. Rather than displaying strong loyalty to a single brand, the participants explained that they shop across brands, and that they have some favourites such as Zara, Arket, & Other Stories, Gina Tricot, and H&M, unisonly drawn to pieces that reflects a minimalistic, timeless, scandinavian style, proving that there is an overall similarity in style preference among the customers who shop at Adoore. This style preference reveals how identity expression is both personal and social, shaped by friends, social media, influencers, social circles and societal norms. This can be described in the light of Brand Experience theory, which emphasizes how shared brand interests create a sense of belonging. Adding to this, several respondents noted that seeing friends wear clothes from Adoore sparked their own interest in the brand, reinforcing emotional connections to the brand and its products.

Furthermore, many participants preferred making meaningful, personally relevant fashion choices over blindly following trends, since this was perceived as more ‘authentic’. Such behavior corresponds with what has been outlined in Emotional Experience theory, strongly highlighting consumption as symbolic and emotionally driven. This way clothing acts as a tool to confirm identity and regulate emotions. In terms of alignment with personal style and values, several participants, including Respondent 5, expressed identification with Adoore’s image: *"I have a feminine clothing style and love their colorful, flowery dresses."* Others, such as, Respondent 9, appreciated the brand’s aesthetics but felt less personally connected: *"I love their summer dresses, but I have not bought anything yet. I just have not had the right occasion."* These variations in perceived fit can be understood in relation to Brakus et al. (2009) conceptualization of Brand Experience as closely tied to identity-related processes. When a brand’s aesthetic resonates with an individual’s self-image, the emotional connection appears to deepen. In contrast, when this alignment is lacking, the experience when interacting with the brand may remain more superficial or situational.

From what was noticed the in-store experience further activated the identity connections. Customers arrived with clear expectations formed through digital touchpoints, anticipating an elegant, well-organized store that would be reflecting Adoore’s stylish and exclusive image. This anticipation can be described with the customer journey framework, where brand perceptions develop before physical interaction. For many, the sensory environment, such as the visual design, atmosphere, and layout, matched these expectations, deepening their

emotional engagement which can be described through the lens of the Brand Experience concept.

Exploring Brand Awareness and Consumer Perceptions

All respondents said they first discovered Adoore through social media exposure and via influencers, confirming the role of social and emotional dimensions in the early-stage brand interaction and initial awareness stage (Brakus et al., 2009; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). As Respondent 1 noted, *"I saw influencers wearing their dresses, and a friend of mine spoke highly of them too."* Similarly, Respondent 2 highlighted, *"I started following Petra Tungården and then saw everyone wearing these beautiful dresses."* This consistent pattern underlines the impact of peer influence, word-of-mouth, and aspirational marketing in shaping initial awareness which can be well described with the Awareness and Consideration stages of the CJM framework.

When asked about the overall perception of Adoore and their values, the answers varied. Some of the respondents did not know what the brand values of Adoore was, while others, such as Respondent 6, felt that the brand promoted a positive messaging on confident women: *"They seem very genuine and want women to feel beautiful and confident"*. Others like Respondent 10 were more skeptical, stating, *"I don't feel like I'm part of their target group. Their colors and designs aren't really me."* This illustrates how the emotions connected to the brand can vary significantly depending on individual preferences and perceptions. As outlined by Emotional Experience Theory, emotional reactions influence consumers' attitudes and behaviors, not only based on the product attributes, but also how the brand makes them feel. These findings can be understood in the light of this theory, since some respondents describe forming strong emotional bonds with the brand, while others do not. This highlights the subjective nature of brand experiences and suggests that emotional resonance plays an important role in how consumers engage with the brand.

Interestingly, critical voices emerged regarding quality and price expectations. Respondent 3 questioned the brand's premium positioning versus perceived material quality and Respondent 5 expressed similar concerns around size and inclusivity. The emotional and visual construction of the brand online seem to create high expectations, but if these are not fulfilled in the physical environment, it appears to risk damaging the brand's emotional capital.

Determining Shopping Behavior and Underlying Motivations

There appeared to be common shopping patterns among respondents. For some the behavior was characterized by browsing online for inspiration and subsequently visiting physical stores to complete their purchases, so called webrooming (Guan et al., 2021; Jing, 2018). A majority responded that they typically seek inspiration and browse for garments online before visiting a store to try the items on, determine the correct size, and finalize their purchase. As Respondent 6 expressed, *"If I'm buying something more expensive, I want to be sure I can use it more than once."* Likewise, Respondent 4 reflected on how the physical environment helps

her determine whether an aspirational purchase lives up to her expectations. These insights may be understood through the lens of Helm et al. (2020), who discuss how, during the purchase stage of the customer journey, physical stores can reduce uncertainty by allowing consumers to directly engage with the product's material and features.

For other respondents the behavior was the opposite, browsing for and trying on items directly in-store. As Respondent 9 shared, *"I almost only shop in stores, I find it difficult with sizes online."* But even when visiting the store first, it did not always end up with the purchase being made in-store. Some would wait and contemplate the purchase, and order it at a later time online, which is characterised as showrooming behavior (Jing, 2018). The respondents' complex shopping behavior exemplifies what has been problematized in CJM theory, describing the intricate behavior of today's customers within retail. It also further highlights the need for personalization, consistency and functionality across all touch points, since each step of the customer journey can begin or end in different environments, and the decision making is individual to each customer. Other shopping behaviors included gathering inspiration or staying up to date with new trends, to support their sense of style, which did not necessarily involve making a purchase. As Respondent 2 said: *"I love to get inspiration and browse in stores."*

When explaining why they behave in certain manners, respondents indicated varying motivations. Some described shopping primarily as a form of entertainment and social activity, often done together with friends. Others had more practical motivations, stating how they only purchase new items when necessary or for special occasions. For instance, Respondent 3 and Respondent 12 indicated that Adoore purchases were linked to events such as midsummer, weddings, or graduations. This indicates that purchasing decisions were rarely impulsive, particularly given the relatively high price point of the garments, suggesting that for a higher priced item there is a higher involvement in the purchase. A contrasting example was expressed; making a purchase at a brand like ZARA where the clothes are cheaper, does not require as much thought process. While Wang et al. (2019) suggest that consumers may engage in impulse buying behavior in the purchase stage, the findings instead reflect a more deliberate and occasion-driven approach to shopping, which may point to the brand's positioning and perceived exclusivity. As Respondent 9 explained, *"I don't just buy to buy, I wait until it's exactly what I want."* Several respondents emphasized price sensitivity as a central factor in their decision making, often searching for online discounts even after visiting physical stores. For instance, if there is an exclusive online offer online with a better price this will probably influence them to make the final transaction online rather than in-store. Thus, while shopping involves emotional aspects, it is evidently also driven by practical considerations, the most prominent one being price. This is not surprising, but it does emphasize that while the Emotional Experience Theory explains the emotional drivers, it may not fully explain the more rational, cost-driven behaviors. The findings suggest that while some participants resonate with this experiential perspective, others take a more functional standpoint, highlighting how shopping motivations may shift depending on their individual needs and the situational contexts.

Mapping the Customer Journey: Emotional and Experiential Touchpoints

Awareness & Consideration Stage

In the Customer Journey Mapping theory, the awareness involves a first trigger when encountering the brand. In terms of the store launch, participants said they discovered it through Adoore's social media engagement, influencer content, outdoor ads, and word-of-mouth. Furthermore, the information seeking process before visiting the store primarily occurred on the website and social media, though not always in an active manner. The participants described passively encountering posts, videos, or ads featuring the store launch. Others engaged more deliberately with trying to find practical details like store hours or product availability. However, some experienced frustration when attempting to access this information, perceiving a lack of clarity or responsiveness from the brand's side, for example about product range and size availability in store. This highlights the crucial aspect of maintaining clear, accessible, and timely digital communication across all touchpoints. During the consideration stage it was understood that many of the respondents went with friends or got informed about the store from friends. This information sharing among customers reflects emotionally engaged customers acting that are acting as as brand ambassadors connecting the circle between the first awareness stage and the last advocacy stage, explaining how this is a continuous circle (Bubphapant & Brandão, 2023; Pai et al., 2015; Sweeney, 2020), reinforcing the brand's credibility through social validation.

Also prominent during the consideration stage was the respondents' high expectations on the store experience. For instance, they expected a certain stylish and luxurious store interior and light and airy atmosphere, a fully available product range, and impeccable service - suggesting that they had already internalized Adoore's visual identity, brand image and personality before even entering the store.

Regarding expectations on store design, participants such as Respondent 5, Respondent 3 and Respondent 12 expected the store to feel elegant, cozy, well-designed, and in line with the premium image that Adoore presents online. These expectations illustrate how consumers mentally construct their anticipation of the in-store experience based on the brand's visual and sensory cues. According to Brand Experience Theory, elements such as color schemes, store design, and overall aesthetics evoke specific emotions and cognitive responses that shape how customers perceive and relate to the brand (Brakus et al., 2009; Mazid, 2023). Moreover, the perception that higher price points signal greater exclusivity further influences these expectations, reinforcing the belief that the physical store should reflect the premium nature of the brand and enhance the overall emotional connection. Furthermore, the expectations regarding the product range were clear. The respondents expected to find all the clothes that they could see online, and that they would be able to try on their size. This reflects the cognitive and sensory dimensions of brand experience, where digital impressions shape what the customer expects in the physical environment. The brand's online communication seemed to create a mental image that influenced what participants hoped to experience in-store, which can be understood through the cognitive and sensory aspects of brand experience described by Brakus et al. (2009). Moreover, when it came to service

quality Respondent 6, was one of the visitors who entered the store with high expectations on personalized service resembling a boutique-like experience. Ultimately, this can be explained with Emotional Experience and Brand Experience theory, where it is not just the product but the entire experience that creates emotional value, making the consideration phase an important emotional stage - highlighting how feelings and imagined experiences shapes consumer perceptions already ahead of the actual interaction with the brand. Let's say participants' expectations aren't met when entering the store; Emotional Experience Theory suggests this could lead to negative emotions that reduce their ongoing engagement, even if they don't explicitly express it.

Additionally, there were those who visited the store spontaneously, like Respondent 1 and Respondent 7, who still had unconscious expectations based on what they had seen briefly online about the brand. This indicates that the digital brand identity plays a significant role in shaping pre-visit perceptions, even in cases where the customer does not intentionally seek out information. These interpretations can ultimately be understood through the Brand Experience framework, where digital stimuli, for example content on Instagram, generates cognitive and sensory expectations regarding the physical store.

Purchase Stage

The purchase stage of the Customer Journey Mapping was assessed in-store. During the visit experiential, sensational and emotional aspects were explored and will be analysed using the Emotional Experience and Brand Experience theory. There seemed to be a clear connection between the experience in-store and the visitor's attitude, which also affected their purchase decisions.

The customers felt various emotions during the store visit. Some described the experience as special and exciting, especially when seeing the products in person compared to solely seeing them online, while others were not as impressed. The store was seen as a social destination for those who visited the store with friends or attended the launch event mainly for the social aspect. Marketing efforts, influencer content, and early-bird incentives like goodie bags for a selection of the first arrivals further enhanced the feeling of exclusivity and meaningfulness.

For most visitors the expectations of the store design were met. Respondent 6 commented, *"It was very stylish as I expected,"* indicating that the physical store matched her mental image. This relates to the sensory dimension of Brand Experience, where sensory cues, such as visual design and atmosphere, contribute to how consumers experience and interpret a brand. This alignment between expectation and reality was emphasized by Respondent 11, who described the visit as *"the full experience"* and felt the feeling of stepping into the brand's world. It can be well explained with what Brakus et al. (2009) stated; that brands can create social experiences, which can bring the feeling of relating to a group (Brakus et al., 2009). A notable example is Respondent 11, who described her decision to purchase as being driven by the completeness of the in-store experience: *"It felt like the circle was complete, I came in, I saw, and I bought something."* She emphasized that the relaxed atmosphere and engaged staff at Adoore made her feel supported rather than rushed. This suggests that a positive store

atmosphere, combined with authentic and helpful interaction, can create an emotional connection strong enough to tip the balance toward a purchase.

Furthermore, the store created a sense of security and validation for several of the visitors which positively affected the purchase intent. This resonates with ideas from Emotional Experience Theory (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Brakus et al., 2009), where feelings of comfort and emotional connection are understood as contributing factors in how consumers relate to a brand and move toward a purchase decision. The feeling of comfort mainly stemmed from three aspects; the alignment of the brand's visual aesthetics from online to offline in terms of interior, design and colour palette, which provided a sense of recognition and familiarity, helpful interaction from the store personnel, and the opportunity to try on garments to estimate the fit. These aspects together generated a sense of sureness and confidence which, for some, translated into a purchase, either in-store or later online. As Respondent 3 expressed: *"I could try it on, and it made me want to shop in the store."* Furthermore, positive interactions with the staff enhanced customers' perception of the brand and increased their purchase intention. Respondents who received attentive, inspiring, and personalized service were more inclined to make a purchase, describing the experience as enjoyable and confidence boosting. For instance, Respondent 9 stated that "*(...) I saw them helping another girl who was going to be a bridesmaid and they were really sweet and supportive. They gave really honest tips like saying 'that one is really nice, but I think you should try this one too' so it feels like they really care about their customers"*.

However, this sense of comfort was undermined for some visitors who were unable to try on items due to long queues and limited access to the fitting rooms. General discomfort from overcrowding or lack of interaction with staff further generated negative emotions. Respondent 1 emphasized the emotional impact of this describing her visit as *"too much of a project"* due to the combination of crowding and lack of assistance, making her leave without a purchase. Lack of engagement and poor service was highlighted by Respondent 13 and Respondent 12 who both stated that they did not receive any help during their visit, which decreased their will to make a purchase. This reflects how the social and atmospheric aspects of the physical environment can influence emotional responses, as discussed by Brakus et al. (2009) in their exploration of brand experience. Several respondents noticed when they were not greeted or asked if they needed help. This made them feel overlooked. Respondent 2 said *"I myself have worked in a store and know that you should say hello when a new customer walks in, so that you show that "I am here if you need help", and I didn't really feel that way when I came in there"*. Respondent 12 also mentioned: "*during a new opening, maybe it should be a little more "GO"*? This illustrates what Brakus et al. (2009) point out, that interactions with sales staff can evoke emotional responses that shape how customers experience and relate to a brand. This highlights the interplay between store environment and perceived effort, where negative physical conditions inhibit the purchasing outcome. Farquhar and Rowley (2009) emphasized that ease and time-efficiency when choosing products is important for a seamless purchase experience in the customer journey purchase stage, which evidently shows here. This also reflects the theory on Emotional Experiences - if

consumers get negative emotions connected to a brand, it can lead to avoidance behavior and weaken the customer relationship (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Gatautis & Pilelienė, 2019).

Furthermore, regarding the expectations on product availability, negative in-store experiences were expressed by several respondents. Respondents 2, 4, 6 12 and 13 felt disappointed by a limited stock availability and size availability, since they had expected a full selection. As Respondent 13 noted, "*Not all sizes were available, and they seemed really busy, so I didn't ask.*" She highlighted how this made her feel excluded. Respondent 6 said: *"I had hoped they would have had their full assortment in store,"* and Respondent 4 said; "*I thought there would be more dresses*". Respondent 2 stated the same: *"It didn't feel like they had their entire range"*. This suggests that while the overall brand experience, such as atmosphere and ambience is important, there is also a crucial aspect of providing the right products, having an assortment of the products that the customers want to see. Otherwise, this removes some of the positive feelings from the overall experience and it will also reduce the chance of the customer making a purchase in store. This was also touched upon by Farquhar and Rowley (2009) and Hokkanen et al. (2020), who suggest that a diverse product range contributes to a more satisfying customer journey and can influence how the store experience is perceived, especially in the purchase stage of the CJM. Additionally, Respondent 12 noted a size discrimination: *"It was strange because there were many of size 34 and not more variety. That's not the most common size."* This suggests that product availability is not only a practical matter but is also tied to customers' perception of inclusivity and brand competence.

The level of enthusiasm for the overall store experience also varied depending on the visitor's pre-existing connection to the brand. Those who were already familiar with Adoore, like Respondent 11 and Respondent 10 that had previously purchased from the brand, expressed greater excitement and appreciation for the in-store experience. Their brand loyalty seemed to enhance their perception of the physical space, while visitors who felt more neutral or less interested in the brand's offerings were more reserved. For example, Respondent 7, who accompanied a friend and felt less excited about the brand, remarked that the store felt *"very sterile"* and lacked energy, describing the staff as *"too stiff"*. Similarly, Respondent 12, who did not identify with Adoore's clothing patterns or personal style, expressed a neutral stance. These differing reactions suggest that prior emotional engagement with the brand plays a significant role for overall customer experience in-store.

Retention & Advocacy Stage

Most respondents indicated that their perception of Adoore remained consistent after visiting the physical store. For some, the in-store experience even deepened their connection to the brand, demonstrating how personal interactions and emotional engagement enhances the customer experience. Adoore was perceived as an authentic brand successfully conveying the same emotional values across both online and offline channels. Respondent 11, Respondent 5 and Respondent 10 said that they felt more positive about Adoore after their visit to their store. Beverland and Farrelly (2010) emphasized that when consumers feel involved and connected to a brand community, it creates a stronger sense of authenticity in the brand experience. Accordingly, when respondents reflected on their visit, many described how the

physical encounter did deepen their personal connection to the brand. The physical environment became an embodiment of the brand.

Furthermore, it seemed that the store's central location and ease of access played a significant role in respondents' willingness to return. Within the customer journey framework, McArthur (2015) emphasizes that location functions as a key touchpoint that can shape consumer behavior and contribute to a seamless and positive brand experience. The convenience of a spontaneous visit while already in the area reduced the effort and made the store feel more integrated into everyday routines, for example walking past it on the way home from work or school. This accessibility lowered the barrier for engagement and increased the likelihood of drop-in visits, even without a clear purchase intent. As Respondent 12 said: *"It's on my way to school, so I might just pop in and look around, even if I don't plan to buy anything."* This suggests that the location of the store not only affects foot traffic but also subtly encourages brand familiarity and engagement over time.

Despite mostly positive attitudes after the store visit, the retention aspect seemed to be limited for some respondents due to geography and personal style mismatch. Those who did not live nearby or felt the brand did not reflect their aesthetic, such as Respondent 7 and Respondent 12, showed little to no intent of coming back. As Respondent 7 noted, *"I wouldn't go there just for myself... the clothes don't really fit me or my style."* This suggests that not only convenience, but also the brand's identity and style - in comparison to the customer's own identity and style - has to align in order for a lasting customer loyalty. The respondents' reflections after the visit show that the customer journey does not end at the point of purchase, but continues into retention (the willingness to return) and advocacy (the act of recommending the brand) which then connects back to the awareness stage. A positive in-store experience strengthens the desire to return, while negative aspects, such as a lack of identification with the brand or geographic distance, limit retention. This can be explained with Lemon and Verhoef (2016) perspective on Customer Journey Mapping, highlighting the post-purchase stage as vital for fostering loyalty and advocacy, where both emotional and practical elements influence the customer's ongoing relationship with the brand.

Advocacy appeared to be effectively activated through exclusive offers and experiential elements that went beyond standard transactional shopping. Several respondents emphasized that creating memorable and distinctive experiences, rather than simply selling products, was key to encouraging return visits and deeper brand engagement. Respondent 11 and Respondent 10 value a complete experience in-store. This resonates with the customer journey mapping and emotional experience theory (Gielens, 2022; Helm et al., 2020), that offering engaging and social experiences that go beyond the transactional shopping is important for purchase intent. For instance, Respondent 10 described how she values an over the top shopping experience, drawing a parallel to luxury boutiques where customers are offered champagne and personalized guidance, which she highlights makes her more likely to shop in store. She noted that if her purpose were to purchase a product, she would do so online. Visiting the store, however, is about *"feeling something"* and *"experiencing something"* according to Respondent 10 and Respondent 11. This is in line with Emotional

Experience Theory and how it suggests that shopping can be symbolic and emotional rather than simply practical or functional (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). The emotional connection to the brand is built not on the transaction itself, but on the overall experience (the store's atmosphere, the staff's approach, the sense of exclusivity etc) and how it makes the customer feel. This lies at the core of Emotional Experience Theory (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982).

Other examples suggested by the respondents that could elevate the experience further included promotional campaigns and customer-focused activities such as in-store events or personalized gifts. Extra aspects like these seemed to generate positive emotions and a sense of being valued, which in turn increased the likelihood that customers would not only return to the store, but also recommend and promote the brand to others. This aspect is explained in Brand Experience Theory on how emotions connected to the brand are not only valuable in the moment of the store visit but also influence long term memory formation and brand perceptions.

Summary

This section presents the Concluded Discussion and Theoretical Contributions, followed by a Conclusion, Managerial Implications, and finally the Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research.

Concluded Discussion and Theoretical Contributions

The empirical findings provide significant insights valuable for academic research and contribute to the academic field on Customer Journey Mapping and Customer Experience by building on previous research adding a qualitative, in-depth perspective incorporating emotional experiences.

In the Awareness stage of the CJM, social media and peer influence shape brand awareness by reinforcing emotional and social connections. This highlights the role of identity expression and group belonging in early brand encounters, advancing customer journey mapping theory. The findings also contribute to Brand Experience Theory by showing how symbolic and emotional interactions bring a sense of community, where brand aspiration is both an individual and collective experience shaped by social dynamics.

In the Consideration stage, customers, especially those with strong brand connections, form clear expectations about how a digitally native brand should translate into its physical store environment. They mentally construct the store experience based on online engagement, imagining details like design, layout, and service. A perceived gap, or misalignment, between digital identity and in-store reality can therefore weaken trust and interest. This deepens Brand Experience Theory by showing that brand perceptions are shaped not only by direct interactions but also by cognitive and emotional anticipations formed through digital

touchpoints. The findings highlight the need for seamless alignment across online and offline channels, reflecting the evolving, hybrid nature of consumer-brand experiences.

The findings highlight that a coherent physical environment reflecting the brand's digital identity, through consistent atmosphere, visual design, and sensory cues, enhances feelings of familiarity, security, and authenticity. This alignment strengthens emotional engagement, brand trust, and purchase motivation. On the other hand, disruptions such as inconsistent service or overcrowding weaken this connection and reduce purchase intent. These insights extend Emotional Experience Theory and Brand Experience Theory by emphasizing the critical role of seamless online-to-offline brand consistency in shaping retail customer experiences and in-store buying behavior.

Moreover, this study contributes to the retention and advocacy stage of the CJM framework connecting this to a store visit by showing how in-store experiences strongly impact post-purchase behavior and brand attachment. The results reveal that positive emotional responses during the store visit, driven by both hedonic and utilitarian values, increase the intention to return and strengthen customer loyalty. Strong emotional connections, especially from memorable in-store experiences, drive brand advocacy. Customers with high emotional engagement actively recommend the brand, showing that emotional resonance boosts loyalty and turns satisfied customers into authentic advocates, expanding the brand's reach through word-of-mouth.

Further insights building on the Brand Experience theory showed that certain product categories appeared more compelling to experience in physical retail settings, particularly those where sensory evaluation is valuable, such as perfumes, clothing, makeup, and skincare. Physical stores provide the opportunity to see, touch, and smell products, which in itself enhances the customer experience because it engages all of the customer's senses, which in itself might be more memorable and increase brand recall. When this sensory engagement is further enriched by elements such as interior design, ambiance, signature smell, social interaction, or in-store events, it can create a compelling brand experience. The findings also revealed that for higher-priced items, an important part of the purchase experience involves visiting the physical store, turning the purchase into a special occasion and a more meaningful activity. The act of purchasing over the counter, receiving the item in a branded shopping bag, and leaving with a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment all enhance the emotional and symbolic value of the purchase and have positive effects on retention and advocacy. Hence, physical stores were associated with expectations of added value, something beyond the mere exchange of goods, such as inspiration, enjoyment, or memorable experiences. This contribution to the CJM framework by emphasizing the role that physical stores play in today's omnichannel retail landscape.

In summary, we contribute with an increased understanding of how the physical store serves as a critical touchpoint in the CJM framework. We have concluded this by expanding the Customer Journey Map from *Figure 1* (p.7) adding the Emotional Experience Theory and Brand Experience Theory, creating a Conceptual Map that summarises our Theoretical Contributions within the field as can be seen in *Figure 2* below.

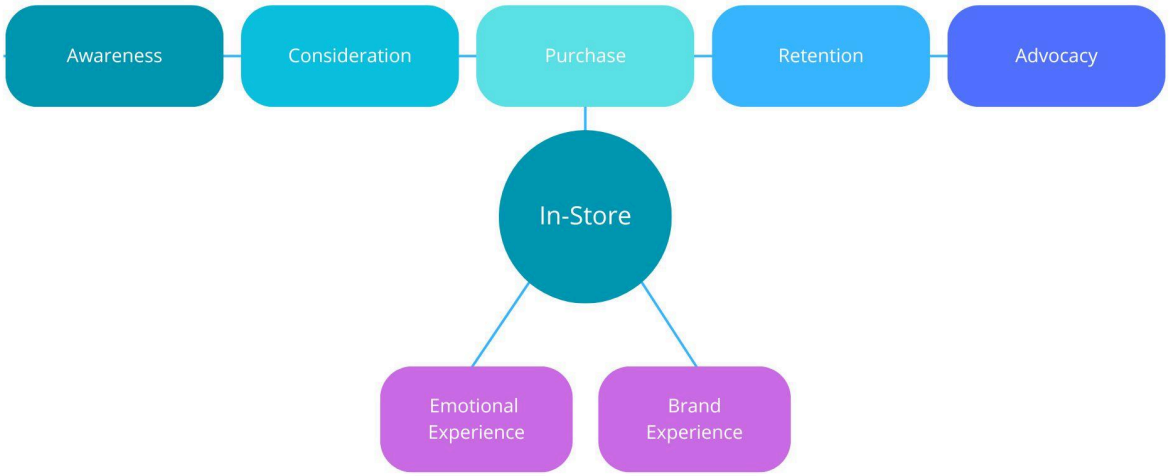

Figure 2. Extended Customer Journey Map incorporating In-Store Emotional Experiences (Johansson & Krantz, 2025)

This conceptual model illustrates how the Customer Journey stages; *awareness*, *consideration*, *purchase*, *retention*, and *advocacy*, are influenced by the customer's emotional experiences during a visit. At the core of this model is the physical store encounter, which serves as a critical touchpoint. This moment is shaped by two key theoretical dimensions: Emotional Experience and Brand Experience. This integrated perspective offers a more holistic understanding of consumer behavior, distinguishing this study from prior research that has often treated the in-store experience or customer journey as separates.

Conclusion

To conclude, physical stores remain essential for a satisfying shopping experience by offering sensory and emotional engagement that digital channels alone can't provide. Even though the societal trend is moving towards digital, this research points to the significance of lived brand experiences in real life. Customers state that they want to see and feel the products, experience the in-store atmosphere of the brand's world and receive personalized service, because this deepens trust, enhances authenticity and provides meaningful memories.

This study examined the emotional and sensational experiences of consumers visiting physical stores launched by digital-native brands, addressing the research questions of how consumers experience such store concepts and why they choose to visit physical stores over e-commerce platforms. The findings revealed that emotional and symbolic factors both prior to, during and after a store visit play a crucial role in why they visit the store, how the store is perceived and experienced and if they want to return.

Looking beyond the Adoore selection case, this study highlights a broader trend in omnichannel retail where physical stores offer irreplaceable emotional connections through hands-on product experience, social interaction, and identity expression. These motivations deepen the Customer Journey Mapping by adding emotional and symbolic dimensions,

showing how physical stores create unique value for consumers even in a digital-dominated market, directly addressing the study's purpose of understanding consumer experiences with physical stores established by digital native brands. Positive experiences were deeply connected to how the in-store environment aligned with the brand's digital communication emphasizing a holistic approach to building unique brand experiences that feels authentic. These experiences were not just transactional, but perceived as entering a 'brand bubble', incorporating sensory and emotional aspects, which highlights the relevance of Emotional Experience Theory and Brand Experience Theory in the field of understanding how brand value and customer loyalty are formed.

In today's evolving retail landscape, where both online and offline shopping coexist, previous research suggests that online shopping dominates and predicts a 'Retail Apocalypse'. However, our findings offer a more nuanced perspective since a majority of our respondents expressed a clear preference for in-store shopping, emotional engagement, sensory experiences and a stronger connection to the brand. Our study challenges the notion of the "Retail Apocalypse" by highlighting how physical retail continues to play a vital role in the customer journey. While the consumer shopping habits have changed, physical stores remain essential spaces for forming emotional and symbolic brand connections. The role of the store has evolved beyond purchase facilitation to delivering meaningful, experiential value that can compete with the convenience of online shopping. Emotional and sensory fulfillment in-store enriches the customer journey and strengthens brand engagement, highlighting the continued relevance of physical retail despite the rise of e-commerce.

To summarize, this study suggests that physical stores are far from obsolete in the face of e-commerce growth. Rather, they remain essential spaces where emotional, sensory, and symbolic connections to the brand can be made, enriching and adding valuable depth to the overall customer journey. What has shifted is the role that the store plays. It is no longer only about making a purchase, but about the feelings and experiences associated with the visit. The perceived value of going to the store, has to conquer the convenience of shopping online, and the key to this lies in the emotional and experiential fulfillment that the store offers.

Managerial Implications

Businesses can use these insights to leverage their omnichannel retail strategies, especially brands who operate online and want to expand to physical retail settings. Moreover, this study provides valuable insights for digital-native brands expanding into physical retail. Brands should ensure consistency between their online identity and physical store design, using the store as an emotional touchpoint for storytelling, community and experiences rather than just transactions. Social media strategies should also be aligned to build emotional expectations that are fulfilled in-store. Additionally, the decision to visit the store was shaped by targeted promotional activities. These included influencer-hosted events, pre-launch images of the store shared on social media, and traditional outdoor advertising such as local posters. To further attract customers, offering value-added experiences, such as goodie bags or personalized products, proved to be an effective strategy since it was appreciated by

several of the respondents and appeared to increase their interest and convince them to visit the store.

For consumers, this leads to more convenient, consistent and personalized shopping journeys. The results clearly show that customers' emotional experiences play a crucial role in how a brand is perceived and their probability to return to or recommend the brand to others. On a societal level, the findings support the development of more customer-centric and technological adaptive service systems that respond to changing expectations and behaviors in a digitalized world. Open physical stores can contribute to more vibrant and engaging city centres by offering enjoyable experiences beyond shopping. This encourages social interaction and enhances the attractiveness of urban spaces, which many consumers value when spending time with friends.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study offers valuable insights into the role of physical stores within an omnichannel retail environment, yet several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample consisted of a relatively homogenous group of young women between the ages of 22 and 28, primarily located in Gothenburg. This limits the generalizability of the findings to other age groups, regions, and demographic segments. Second, the focus on a single brand Adoore, means that some insights may be context-specific and not directly transferable to other digital-native brands with different values, aesthetics, or target audiences. Lastly, the research captures a short-term reflection on a recent store visit and does not account for long-term behaviors such as repeat purchases or sustained brand advocacy.

Future research could address these limitations in several ways. Broader and more diverse samples would provide comparative insights across different consumer segments. A multi-brand study could explore whether the emotional and symbolic value of in-store experiences applies across other digital-native retailers. In addition, studies over time could track how physical experiences influence long-term loyalty and advocacy. Mixed-method approaches that combine qualitative depth with quantitative data could also strengthen the reliability and applicability of findings.

Moreover, future research could explore how physical stores contribute to a company's sustainability efforts. By examining the role of stores in circular business models, choice of materials, energy efficiency and return handling, we can gain a broader understanding of how sustainability can also be integrated offline. Finally, considering that digital-native brands are navigating a post-pandemic retail environment, future research could also examine how customer expectations and emotional needs evolve over time in relation to physical retail spaces.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Interview questions translated in English.

Number	Interview Question	Theme	Theoretical Framework	Reference
1	How old are you?	Introductory questions (Background & warm-up)	General Question	-
2	Where do you live?	Introductory questions (Background & warm-up)	General Question	-
3	Are you interested in fashion and clothing?	Introductory questions (Background & warm-up)	General Question	-
4	What are your favorite clothing brands?	Introductory questions (Background & warm-up)	General Question	-
5	How would you describe your personal clothing style?	Introductory questions (Background & warm-up)	General Question	-
6	How do you know about the brand Adoore?	Brand Awareness and Relationship with Adoore	Brand Experience	Lemon & Verhoef, 2016
7	What do you think about Adoore as a brand?	Brand Awareness and Relationship with Adoore	Brand Experience	Bae & Kim, 2023; Brakus et al. 2009.
8	How would you describe Adoore's style and values?	Brand Awareness and Relationship with Adoore	Brand Experience Emotional Experience	Bae & Kim, 2023; Brakus et al. 2009.

9	Do you think the brand reflects your personal style, and aligns with your own values? Why or why not?	Brand Awareness and Relationship with Adoore	Brand Experience Emotional Experience	Mugge et al., 2010; Oh et al., 2020.
10	Do you shop from Adoore? Why/why not? If yes, how often?	Brand Awareness and Relationship with Adoore	Brand Experience	Brakus et al., 2009.
11	What motivates you to shop for clothes? For example, when you need something, to maintain a certain style, with your friends, or because you enjoy the activity, etc.	Shopping Behavior	Brand Experience Customer Journey Mapping Emotional Experience	Blackwell et al., 2006; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Solomon et al., 2013;
12	How do you usually shop for clothes? (the purchase journey)	Shopping Behavior	Customer Journey Mapping	Lemon & Verhoef, 2016;
13	Have you previously visited physical stores that started as e-commerce companies? If yes, what made you go there?	Shopping Behavior	Customer Journey Mapping	Rhode, 2025; Adoore, 2025; Aim'n, 2025; Nordström, 2024; OneMiletheLabel, 2025.
14	What made you visit Adoore's	Shopping Behavior	Customer	Blackwell et al., 2006; Farquhar

	physical store instead of their online store? Was your decision influenced by any needs, social media, campaigns, recommendations etc?		Journey Mapping	& Rowley, 2009; Gielens, 2022; Helm et al., 2020; Hokkanen et al., 2020; Kotler & Keller, 2012; McArthur, 2015.
15	Did you search for information about the store/offerings before your visit? If so, how did you search for information? Which channels did you use, such as social media, the website, or others?	Expectations & Information Search (Consideration)	Customer Journey Mapping	Ashman et al., 2015; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Wolny & Charoensuksai, 2014.
16	What were your expectations for the store experience before you went there?	Expectations & Information Search (Consideration)	Brand Experience Customer Journey Mapping	Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Solomon et al., 2013; Ashman et al., 2015; Wolny & Charoensuksai, 2014.
17	Did the store experience meet your expectations?	In-store experience (Purchase)	Brand Experience Emotional Experience	Lemon & Verhoef, 2016.
18	How did you experience the store environment and the opportunity to	In-store experience (Purchase)	Brand Experience Emotional Experience	Helm et al., 2020.

	see, feel, and try on the products compared to shopping online?			
19	How important is the store staff's service to your experience? Did this influence your visit?	In-store experience (Purchase)	Brand Experience Emotional Experience	Fuentes et al., 2017
20	Did you purchase anything in the store? Why or why not?	In-store experience (Purchase)	Customer Journey Mapping	Brakus et al., 20093
21	Was there anything you did not like about the store visit?	In-store experience (Purchase)	Brand Experience Customer Journey Mapping Emotional Experience	Bae & Kim, 2023; Brakus et al. 2009.
22	Will you consider visiting the Adoore store in the future? Did it have anything to do with your visit to the store?	After the store visit (Retention)	Brand Experience Customer Journey Mapping Emotional Experience	Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Bagozzi et al., 1999; Brakus et al., 2009; Oh et al., 2020; Mugge et al., 2010.
23	Would you say the store	After the store visit (Retention)	Brand Experience	Alexander & Kent, 2022; Cai

	experience differs from when you browse online on their website?		Emotional Experience	& Lo, 2020; Cao & Li, 2018; Savastano et al., 2019; Srivastava & Thaichon, 2023.
24	Has your perception of Adoore been influenced after the store visit? Is it the same as before, or has it changed?	After the store visit (Retention)	Brand Experience Emotional Experience	Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Oh et al., 2020; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Mugge et al., 2010
25	Can you think of anything else that would make you want to visit Adoore's store again?	After the store visit (Retention)	Brand Experience Customer Journey Mapping Emotional Experience	Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Rosenbaum et al., 2017; Helm et al., 2020; Brakus et al., 2009; Bagozzi et al., 1999.
26	Do you think more digital brands should open physical stores? Why or why not?	Reflections and Future Motivations	Brand Experience	Bagozzi et al., 1999; He, 2023; Helm et al., 2018; Sheth, 2021, McKinsey & Company, 2021
27	Could stores have looked different than traditional stores?	Reflections and Future Motivations	Brand Experience	Farquhar & Rowley, 2009; Hokkanen et al., 2020; Helm et al., 2020.
28	What would motivate you to enter a store? Do factors such as brand, atmosphere, or advertising	Reflections and Future Motivations	Customer Journey Mapping	Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Farquhar & Rowley, 2009; Hokkanen et al., 2020; Helm et

	influence your decision?			al., 2020; Bagozzi et al., 1999.
29	In your opinion, what generally motivates someone to make a purchase in a physical store?	Reflections and Future Motivations	Customer Journey Mapping	Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Rosenbaum et al., 2017; Marquez et al., 2015.