

SMART CHANNEL – THE NEXT STEP IN THE EVOLUTION OF MARKETING CHANNELS

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of marketing channels has progressed from multichannel to omnichannel strategies, driven by advancements in technology and shifting consumer expectations. This paper introduces the concept of the smart channel as the next step in this evolution, enabled by technologies from the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, virtual and augmented reality, big data, etc. The paper examines the historical development of marketing channels, highlights the limitations of existing omnichannel strategies, and explores how smart channels address these gaps. By utilizing intelligent automation and predictive analytics, smart channels enhance customer satisfaction, streamline processes, and provide competitive advantage for the early adopters. This conceptual paper emphasizes the transformative potential of smart channels to unify physical and digital touchpoints, creating a cohesive and adaptive marketing infrastructure. It concludes by identifying key challenges, such as investment needs and technological integration, while suggesting directions for future research. Ultimately, the smart channel represents a pivotal advancement in marketing, redefining the interaction between brands and consumers in an increasingly dynamic marketplace.

KEY WORDS: smart channel, marketing channel, omnichannel, marketing, marketing channel theory

1. INTRODUCTION

Beginning of contemporary marketing can be traced, according to some authors, at the beginning of 20th century (Sheth et al., 1988). Contemporary marketing textbooks typically do not delve into the historical development of marketing or only briefly mention its evolution in stages, starting from the mid-20th century when the discipline gained international recognition. However, authors such as Shaw and Jones (2005) trace marketing thought back to the emergence of systematic trade at the dawn of humanity over 10,000 years ago. They follow its progression through the works of Plato, Aristotle, and the Middle Ages, culminating in the establishment of marketing as a scientific discipline in the early 20th century. According to Bartels, the term “marketing” was first used in 1910 to identify a scientific discipline. In the United States, the Report of the Industrial Commission on the Distribution of Farm Products is considered the first comprehensive book on marketing, as it addressed the costs associated with the distribution of agricultural products. Early researchers primarily focused on studying distribution systems due to significant price disparities for agricultural products between producers and consumers, coupled with growing criticisms at the time about high distribution costs, which pointed to marketing inefficiencies (Usui, 2008; Palić, 2008). It is safe to state that development of contemporary marketing is therefore closely connected to distribution or marketing channels issue. A marketing channel can be defined as “a set of interdependent organizations involved in the process of making a product or service available for use or consumption” (Palmatier et al., 2020). Today, on average, channel members earn margins that account for 30% to 50% of the final retail price which can be contrasted with all around omni-present advertising that typically amounts for maximum of 5% to 7% of the final price (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Another significant role and importance of marketing channels can be attributed to the building of a sustainable competitive advantage for a company. Unlike some other elements of marketing mix, such as price, marketing channels usually require large investments of time and money. For example, building a network

of bank branches or retail shops can take hundreds of millions of dollars and several decades. Network of franchisors or dealers will also be contractually and legally binding, but when networks are established efficiently, they can create a long-lasting competitive advantage as competitors will need a lot of time and finances to match it. However, recent developments of information-communication technologies, in some cases, made classical middleman and physical retail obsolete charting the whole new paradigm through digital channels (Ledford, 2012). Such development made contemporary channels even more versatile and diverse.

Channels structures and strategies are very adaptive and range from single direct channel to complex multichannels consisting of large number of intermediaries spanning the entire globe. Much like the natural world, channel structures adapt and evolve with environment changes, competitive pressure, technology advances, customer expectations and many other variables and influences. Academics and researchers specialized in channels provided many theories, strategies and constructs in order to explain the evolution of channel systems (Watson et al., 2015; Krafft et al., 2015). The main purpose of this paper is to draw on previous developments and theories of marketing channels and lay foundations for its transition from omnichannel as dominant paradigm of channel organization today towards new step in the evolution of this area: The smart channel.

2. STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This conceptual paper is based on a qualitative, exploratory approach designed to advance theoretical understanding of marketing channel evolution, particularly the transition from omnichannel strategies to the proposed concept of smart channels. The methodology integrates the following components:

1. **Conceptual Framework Development:** The paper builds on established marketing theories and frameworks, including multichannel and omnichannel paradigms, to identify the limitations of current channel strategies and outline the foundation for smart channels. The framework incorporates theoretical constructs from transaction cost theory, agency theory, and relationship marketing to conceptualize the smart channel.
2. **Literature Review as Primary Method:** A comprehensive review of academic literature forms the basis of the analysis. The study synthesizes insights from key scholarly articles, books, and industry reports to map the historical progression of marketing channels, evaluate current strategies, and identify gaps that smart channels can address.
3. **Technology and Trend Analysis:** The methodology employs secondary data analysis of technological advancements associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and the Internet of Things (IoT). These technologies are examined in the context of their potential to enhance marketing channel efficiency and customer engagement.
4. **Comparative Theoretical Analysis:** The study contrasts multichannel and omnichannel models with the proposed smart channel framework, focusing on key differentiators such as customer journey personalization, autonomous processes, and data-driven decision-making. This analysis supports the paper's conceptual contributions.
5. **Exploratory Insights for Future Research:** The paper identifies practical and theoretical challenges in adopting smart channels, offering a roadmap for future empirical research and application. This forward-looking approach ensures the paper's relevance to both academia and industry.

By leveraging these methodological elements, the paper contributes to the theoretical development of marketing channels while offering actionable insights for future research and implementation.

3. THE EVOLUTION OF MULTICHANNEL

Research on marketing channels has taken diverse approaches to understand these essential pathways of economic activity. While early studies were largely rooted in economics, conceptualizing channels of distribution as mechanisms for the flow of goods or services, early 20th century brought into the focus channel network optimization and cost reduction. Vertical marketing systems at that time were treated as extensions of the company, often neglecting non-economic aspects. By the mid-century, research in marketing channels became more prescriptive, focusing on decision-making models that balanced cost considerations, revenue potential, and information management, despite challenges in applying these models to real-world scenarios. Other analytical frameworks, such as functional, organizational, institutional and systems perspectives, also emerged during this time to deepen the understanding of marketing channels

(Watson et al., 2015). At that time, attention shifted toward acknowledging the non-economic dimensions of marketing channels, often emphasizing the broader channel functions, such as the organizational dynamics of distribution systems and behavioral factors impacting channel operations. This marked the beginning of extensive research into relationships between channel partners, incorporating theories on roles, communication, conflict, and power dynamics. These studies also connected earlier research with subsequent inquiries into channel strategies, conflict resolution, and opportunistic behaviors (Krafft et al., 2015).

More recent developments expanded on these theoretical foundations, fostering empirical exploration of intercompany relationships within marketing channels. New constructs emerged to explain channel functions and performance, moving beyond the economic focus of earlier studies to incorporate insights from sociology, social psychology, and political science. Significant progress was made with transaction cost theory and agency theory, which complemented behavioral research and demonstrated the value of integrating economic and behavioral perspectives. Modern studies also introduced structural economic models and advanced dynamic frameworks for analyzing intercompany relationships, ushering in a new era of relationship marketing in channels (Grewal, Kumar & Mallapragada, 2013). Recent academic research reflects the evolution and growth of this field, highlighting the transformative impact of e-commerce and globalization on marketing channels which in business application resulted with multichannel and omnichannel distribution strategies (Hoppner & Griffith, 2015).

Multichannel marketing is a product of two strong environmental forces; first being technological development such as penetration and adoption of internet followed by smartphones which opened a new routes of communication and sales with customers. On the other side, global competitive pressures at reducing costs i.e. delivering higher value or decreasing cost-to-serve (Bruce et al., 2009) caused a number of companies to adopt this strategy. Channel marketing traditionally focused on minimizing cost-to-serve. The strategy involved incorporating lower-cost channels, such as online platforms or offshore call centers, and steering customers toward these options instead of more expensive ones like personal sales representatives or bank branches. At the beginning of XX century many large companies made successful transition to cost-efficient channels and reaped financial benefits.

New, often digital, channels showed a number of advantages beside costs, such as 24/7 availability at any location or a home of a customer with wider selection and offer than physical retail regardless being it FMCG stores, bank branches, booking agencies, etc. This is especially true for mass merchandise selling companies where small change in the channel strategy and costs can translate into very dramatic impacts on profitability. As late adopters followed business leaders in this area and competition embraced multichannel-approach it started to change and evolve from focusing solely on efficiency toward emphasizing effectiveness in building customer preference. In this "new" landscape, utilizing multiple channels offered far more than just cost savings—it has become a critical factor in maintaining a competitive edge. Multichannel marketing became vital for an organization's customer retention strategy, providing valuable insights into customer needs and motivations, and serving as a key component of its overall approach. Operating through multiple channels offered companies much more than just cost savings. It enabled them to adapt to the customer preferences in the way how and where they shop as well as to better target specific segments. Through multiple channels there is more opportunities for up-selling and cross-selling as well (Gensler et al., 2007). From cost savings channel managers' focus shifted to delivering a greater value and enhanced customer experience (Zemanek & Tran, 2021).

At the early development stage, the multichannel strategies begun with a decision what channels should be added to channel mix. Such decision pertained to traditional brick-and-mortar players, as well as at that time emerging new online players, who faced the question of whether they should be present offline as well (Avery et al., 2012). Soon, the scope of multi-channel retailing has, however, been broadened by considering issues such as the management of customers across channels and the integration of the retail mix across channels. With wider adoption of digitalization started second phase in multi-channel retailing characterized by integration of new digital channels such as mobile channels and social media (Leeflang et al., 2014). All this brought a dramatic change in the retail landscape paving a way for the development of a more integrated and seamless multichannel: The omnichannel.

4. OMNICHANNEL AS PREVALENT PRESENT THEORETICAL CONCEPT

In the present digital era customers move through different online and offline channels more than ever. The customer journey become more complex with many touchpoints along the way to the final purchase requiring marketers to guide customers on every step of the way through their journey (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan, 2017). Academic references and industry discussions started differentiating "omnichannel" from "multichannel" marketing around 2010's in order to emphasize the integration and interactivity across all customer touchpoints (Mishra, Singh & Koles, 2020). Omnichannel can be viewed as seamless integration of multichannel used by the company for creating and delivering value to the customer. Levy et al.

(2013) define it as “a coordinated multichannel offering that provides a seamless experience when using all of the retailers shopping channels”. There are several quite similar definitions of omnichannel even though many academics lack consensus where multichannel ends and omnichannel actually begins (Berman & Thelen, 2018). The numerous distinctions between multichannel and omnichannel marketing highlight the complexity and multifaceted nature of omnichannel marketing as shown in Table 1. They also indicate that a company may be at varying stages of implementing an omnichannel marketing strategy, ranging from the initial phase to more advanced or fully integrated stages.

Table 1. Main differences between omnichannel and multichannel approach

Comparative criteria	Multichannel marketing	Omnichannel marketing
<i>Strategy-based differences</i>		
Channel or total firm-based objectives	Focuses on maximizing the performance of a specific channel	Focuses on maximizing a retailer's total performance
Uniformity of message across channels and devices	Does not have a consistent message across all touchpoints	Customers receive a uniform message across channels and devices
Clarity of distinction between the physical and online store	Assumes a division between the physical stores and online facilities exists	There is a smooth and seamless customer experience regardless of the combination of channels and devices used
Role of smartphones, mobile apps and social media	Assumes that the consumer search and purchase behavior is primarily limited to personal computers and in-store facilities	Broadens consumer search and purchase options to include smartphones, mobile apps, tablets, networked appliances and social media. Customers can use multiple touchpoints in a single purchase
Organization format: silo vs integrated	Organized on the basis of silos, with separate organizations, goals, and budgets for online and in-store marketing activities. Each channel is managed independently	A single executive is responsible for merchandising for all channels and devices
Degree of unification of customer and inventory databases throughout the organization	Seeks some cross-functional alignment between store and online. Each channel may sell different products and brands. Each channel has a separate customer and inventory database	Requires a high degree of unification across customer and inventory databases. Markets the same products and brands across all channels. The customer and inventory databases are common across channels
Uniformity of supply chains across channels	Each channel has a separate supply chain	Orders from multiple channels are fulfilled using a common supply chain
<i>Consumer behavior-based differences</i>		
Uniform vs different consumer purchase journeys	Assumes that the consumer purchase journey is similar across customers within a given target audience	Assumes that consumers can have very different purchase journeys. Different purchase journey paths can indicate opportunities to appeal to different target audiences
Linear vs a non-linear purchase journey	Assumes that a traditional sales funnel exists consisting of awareness, search behavior, purchase, and post-purchase behaviors	Assumes that consumers use multiple channels and touchpoints: computers, smartphones, tablets, social media, and in-store experiences at the same point in time. Consumers can employ a non-linear purchase journey by rethinking a purchase option after reviewing online resources
Place of purchase, pickup and return: uniform vs varied	Assumes that the place of purchase, pickup and product return is the same	Consumers have options to purchase, deliver/pickup and return goods through any medium or channel. They could purchase a good via a tablet, have it shipped to their home, and then return it to a nearby store
Ease of movement across channels and devices	Requires a significant effort by consumers as they go from channel to channel	Seeks to minimize the effort customers undertake as they go from channel to channel. Examples include a store's online site showing inventory levels and aisle location at a local store, and allowing an online customer to return an online purchase at a store

Source: Berman & Thelen, 2018

Omnichannel marketing reflects changes in customer behavior and enabling technologies that make it possible for consumers to switch routinely and repeatedly between various channels during a single transaction such as mobile phones, physical retail stores, computers, tablets, in-store kiosks, social media platforms, etc. These channels and touchpoints are utilized interchangeably and often simultaneously by both customers and businesses. In an omnichannel approach, customers can engage with different channel combinations at each stage of their purchase journey, such as product discovery, research, purchase, payment, order fulfillment, and returns (Verhoef et al., 2015). A good example is when customer sees an influencer post promoting certain product on a social network, searches for more product information on a brand's web site and among social network users and reviewers, searches for best prices among different online offers, orders and pays online and schedules pickup in a nearby physical store. Customers could see and try the product in physical store and then go and shop for it online which is sometimes referred as “showrooming” or they can search online and then decide to purchase a product in the physical store which is called “webrooming”, or they can go back and forth using several different channels in the process of the purchase (Gustafson, 2014; Kotler et al., 2017).

Existing academic work on omnichannel marketing focuses on themes such as channel integration, the use of mobile solutions and social media, evolving roles of physical stores, diverse customer needs, balancing personalization with privacy, and supply chain redesign (Baxendale et al., 2015; Beck & Rygl, 2015). Notable contributions, such as Verhoef et al. (2015) matrices, differentiate multichannel and omnichannel strategies based on factors like customer behavior, channel management, and retail mix, revealing significant research gaps in the transition to omnichannel marketing. Studies highlight several benefits of omnichannel strategies. For example, cross-channel integration enhances trust, customer loyalty, conversion rates, and cross-selling opportunities. Recent research shows that omnichannel shoppers spend significantly more both online and in stores compared to single-channel customers, with repeat purchases and loyalty also increasing (Sopadjieva et al., 2017). Studies from Peter & Dalla Vecchia (2021) and others demonstrate the positive financial impact of omnichannel approaches, including increased sales, higher price acceptance, and improved

retailer image through congruent channel integration. For example, some surveys found that omnichannel customers have on average 30% higher CLV than single-channel customers (Kotler et al., 2017). Despite its advantages, omnichannel marketing faces challenges, particularly in meeting customer expectations. Research reveals significant gaps between consumer expectations and retailer performance in areas like inventory visibility, in-store pickup, and seamless cross-channel interactions. Only a small percentage of retailers have fully operationalized omnichannel strategies due to barriers like technological challenges, organizational silos, and poor execution (Huang, 2020; Cai & Lo, 2020). Various frameworks outline the stages of omnichannel integration. For instance, Strang (2013) categorizes omnichannel development and integration into four phases: from basic store and online separation to advanced customer experience and supply chain optimization. Other researchers classify integration into levels ranging from minimal to full alignment of pricing, branding, logistics, and customer data across channels (Domanski, 2021). These frameworks highlight the evolutionary nature of omnichannel marketing, underscoring its potential for greater customer satisfaction and competitive advantage. However, the advent of the 4th Industrial revolution is dramatically redefining future business models and marketing channels will be no exception to this trend.

5. SMART CHANNEL AS THE NEXT STEP IN THE EVOLUTION OF MARKETING CHANNELS

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, commonly referred to as Industry 4.0 or 4IR, represents a transformative shift in industrial processes, characterized by the integration of advanced digital technologies with physical systems. This revolution builds upon the advancements of the previous industrial revolutions, moving from steam power and mechanization in the 18th and 19th centuries, to mass production through electricity in the early 20th century, and finally to the digital revolution brought by computers and automation in the mid-20th century. At its core, Industry 4.0 is defined by the development of cyber-physical systems, where physical machinery is seamlessly integrated with digital control and monitoring mechanisms. This interconnectedness is made possible through the Internet of Things (IoT), which enables machines, devices, and systems to communicate and share data in real time. As a result, manufacturing and other industries can achieve unprecedented levels of efficiency, automation, and customization. (McKinsey & Co, 2022). The phenomenon of the Fourth Industrial Revolution shows the fusion of human and machine intelligence and their intertwining. Wide adoption of Internet that started twenty years ago enabled many technologies that have become mainstream, interconnected and essential for business operations today (Millar, Groth & Mahon, 2018). Meanwhile, increasingly disruptive technologies have emerged, building upon existing tools and shaping innovations like quantum computing, artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), neurotechnology, blockchain, and robotics. The volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous nature of today's rapidly evolving world shows no signs of slowing. To thrive in this dynamic business environment, companies must adopt appropriate tools, set clear goals, and develop strategies aligned with the pace of change. Artificial intelligence, while not yet a general-purpose technology, is viewed as a transformative force driving exponential societal progress and a cornerstone of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Leslie, 2019).

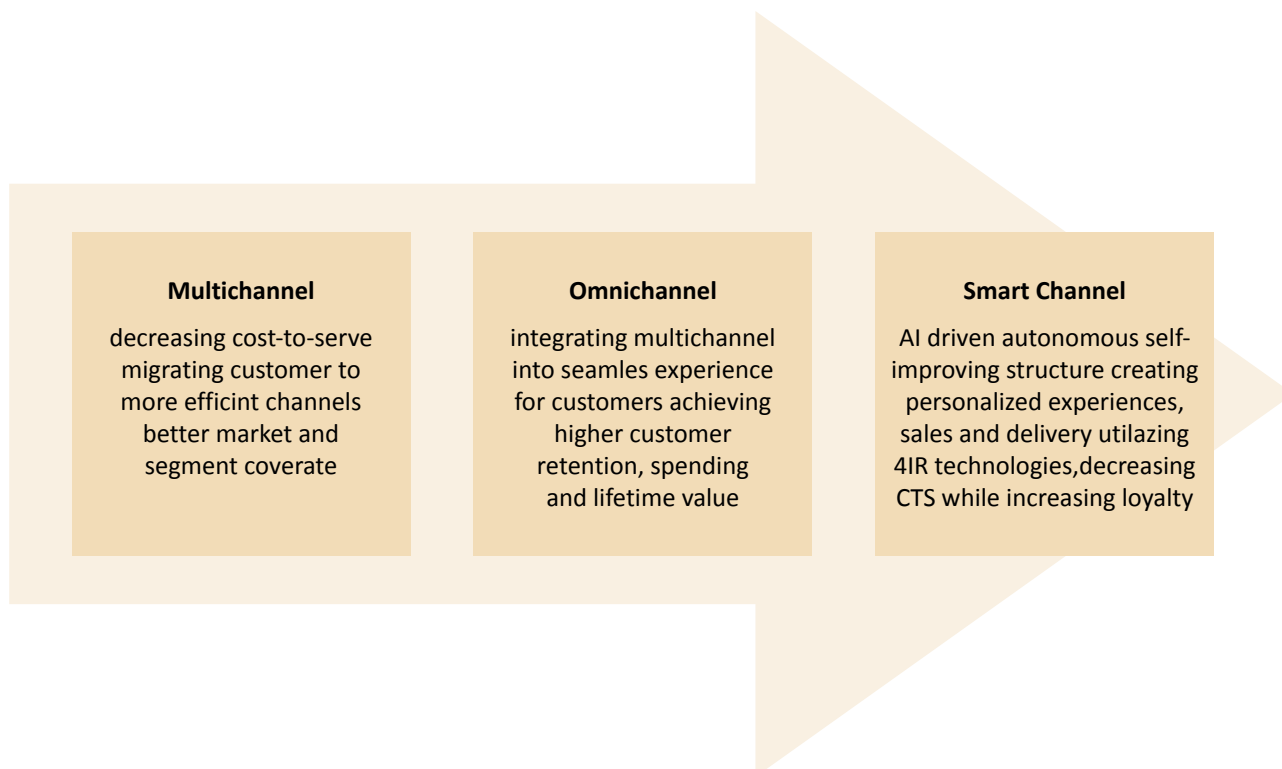
Such "smart" technologies and artificial intelligence systems enable the creation of a new marketing paradigm. This paradigm shifts the traditional passive relationship with brands -characterized by accepting standardized associations and experiences projected by the brand - to an active mode where customers can individualize the brand in their own way and avoid standardization. This eliminates the "dictate" of the brand to impose the same experience on everyone. For luxury brands and niche products or services, this includes immersive experiences associated with the brand, offered both through physical retail spaces and virtual worlds or customer communities. These communities are not merely passive consumers but active co-creators of content and innovations related to the brand. They form a loyal user base collectively advancing the brand and the products or services they utilize.

Application of such 4IR elements into the marketing practice, including sales and distribution are just beginning to emerge (Banjac & Palić, 2020). Thus, the omnichannel strategy, which previously sought to standardize and unify marketing strategy efforts, evolves through technological advancements into the smart channel. This smart channel can not only track the customer journey at every touchpoint but also adapt the journey and its outcomes to the individual preferences of each customer. As a result, customers gain a sense of uniqueness and active participation in every stage of their journey and engagement with the brand (Lišanin, Palić & Tomašević Lišanin, 2024). With the power and massive volume of big data, sensor technology and IoT, using artificial intelligence as a mediator will transform channel processes providing higher efficiency and effectiveness making marketing channels "smart". Smart marketing channel can be defined as an integrated self-improving marketing channel structure that delivers customized value to the customers without or with minimal amount of human involvement. A key feature of Smart channel is integration of key 4IR technologies that enable its intelligent and autonomous functioning. The process of customer acquisition, retention and value delivery should start from the use of big data compiled from customer's digital footprints using machine learning and AI to predict specific needs and tailor customized value offers followed by autonomous communication through social networks, e-mails,

messengers, voice calls and virtual worlds using sales chat-bots/avatars/robots that can communicate with customers through all available channels offering best solutions. Smart channel should not be perceived as purely digital or virtual but should also extend to physical environment using 4IR technologies to make retail outlets “smart” and autonomous (similar to AmazonGo shops). AI technology managing logistics from collecting orders to warehouse and shop fulfillment using IoT, robots and self-driving vehicles and drones for delivery, warehouse and shelf space management, etc. Most of the technological elements for a smart channel of the future, as described here, are present on the market today but are not fully integrated to form such a complex structure or some of them require large investments or/and are under final testing (humanoid robots and self-driving vehicles) before commercialization. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning will further enhance effectiveness by allowing channel systems to learn from data and make intelligent decisions and adjustments without need for direct human intervention thus achieving maximum synergies. Such channels will be an integral part of smart companies that will coordinate and integrate their efforts across the value chain. Across sectors, these advancements are already reshaping traditional practices, fostering innovation, and driving sustainability. Scientific research in this field should focus on enhancing the efficiency and functionality of these technologies while addressing questions related to human-technology interaction, system optimization, and sustainability. By merging physical and digital realms, smart channel is not only revolutionizing distribution but also redefining the relationship between technology, society, and the environment.

Such advanced technologies enable the development of a new style of customer experience management, allowing brands to enhance the purchasing process for the benefit of customers. In the case of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), such smart channels alleviate the psychological and physical burdens of shopping. For instance, a smart refrigerator can automatically update a shopping list in the appropriate app with missing items, recommend favorite products to avoid forgetting them, facilitate automatic payments, arrange delivery, and more. AI-powered retail channels or apps, utilizing big data about the customer, can suggest, create, and update shopping lists, automate ordering and payments, and organize deliveries. Customers only monitor the process via their smartphones, approving elements such as the shopping list or payment. Such AI-driven retail channels and smart devices represent the smart channels of the future, where customers are relieved of parts of the purchasing process. These technological solutions will recognize customer needs, offering individually tailored solutions, sometimes even before the customer becomes aware of the need for a specific product or service. Currently, these solutions are being implemented through various channels, but with further technological development, they will converge into a future smart channel.

Figure 1. Evolution pathway of marketing channels



Source: author

6. CONCLUSION

The evolution of marketing channels from multichannel to omnichannel strategies has significantly transformed how businesses interact with consumers. However, with the advent of Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies, the limitations of omnichannel approaches necessitate the development of a more advanced and adaptive framework—the smart channel. This paper has introduced the concept of the smart channel as the next evolutionary step, capable of integrating technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and big data to create a seamless, intelligent, and personalized customer journey.

Smart channels not only unify physical and digital touchpoints but also adapt dynamically to individual customer preferences, thereby enhancing satisfaction and driving competitive advantage. By leveraging predictive analytics, intelligent automation, and real-time data processing, smart channels redefine the efficiency and effectiveness of marketing strategies, offering businesses a transformative tool for sustaining growth in a dynamic marketplace.

Despite the significant potential of smart channels, challenges such as high investment requirements, technological integration complexities, and organizational readiness remain critical barriers. Addressing these issues will require interdisciplinary collaboration and further empirical research to refine the theoretical framework and validate its practical applications.

Ultimately, the smart channel represents a pivotal advancement in marketing, fostering a paradigm shift in how brands and consumers interact in an increasingly connected world. By embracing the principles of adaptability, personalization, and technological innovation, smart channels promise to set new benchmarks for customer engagement and business performance.

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PAMETNI KANAL – SLJEDEĆA STEPENICA U EVOLUCIJI MARKETINŠKIH KANALA

SAŽETAK

Evolucija marketinških kanala dinamičan je proces koji se u ovom radu prati od multikanalnih do omnikanalnih strategija potaknutih razvojem tehnologije i promjenama u ponašanju i očekivanjima potrošača. Ovaj pregledni rad predstavlja koncept pametnog kanala kao sljedećeg koraka u evoluciji kanala kao posljedice razvoja i aplikacije suvremenih tehnologija Četvrte industrijske revolucije (4IR), poput umjetne inteligencije (AI), strojnog učenja, Interneta stvari (IoT), robotike, virtualne i proširene stvarnosti, velikih podataka itd. Rad istražuje povijesni razvoj marketinških kanala, ističe ograničenja postojećih omnikanalnih strategija te analizira kako pametni kanali nadilaze takve izazove. Korištenjem inteligentne automatizacije i prediktivne analitike, pametni kanali poboljšavaju zadovoljstvo kupaca, pojednostavljaju procese i pružaju konkurentsku prednost za rane usvojitelje ovog koncepta. U radu se naglašavaju transformacijski potencijali pametnih kanala za unifikaciju fizičkih i digitalnih točaka kontakta te stvaranje kohezivne i prilagodljive marketinške infrastrukture. Zaključno, identificiraju se ključni izazovi, poput potreba za investicijama i tehnološkom integracijom, uz prijedloge za buduća istraživanja. U konačnici, pametni kanal predstavlja ključan iskorak u marketingu, redefinirajući interakciju između maraka i potrošača u sve dinamičnijem tržišnom okruženju.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: pametni kanal, marketinški kanal, omnikanal, marketing, teorija marketinških kanala