The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available on Emerald Insight at:
https://www.emerald.com/insight/0959-0552.htm

Ease or excitement? Exploring how concept stores contribute to a retail portfolio

Carys Jane Egan-Wyer
Business Administration, School of Economics and Management, Lund University, Lund, Sweden
Steve Burt
Institute for Retail Studies, University of Stirling, Stirling, UK
Jens Hultman
Faculty of Business, Kristianstad University, Kristianstad, Sweden, and
Ulf Johansson, Alice Beckman and Clara Michélsen
Business Administration, School of Economics and Management, Lund University, Lund, Sweden

Received 8 October 2020
Revised 29 January 2021
6 April 2021
4 May 2021
Accepted 5 May 2021

Abstract

Purpose – The study aims to explore how concept stores (theoretically) differ from other experience-based retail formats, and hence, how they (practically) contribute to a diversified retail store portfolio.

Design/methodology/approach – Case study based on semi-structured, qualitative interviews with seven IKEA retail managers, three industry experts and 26 customers of IKEA concept stores in London and Stockholm.

Findings – The concept store represents a conceptual departure from other experiential store formats. It is neither fully experiential in the sense that it is not only about marketing communications nor is it sales or profit-focused. Its aim is to be an accessible touchpoint that reduces friction on a diversified customer journey with its value to the retail portfolio being that it attracts new and latent customers, mitigates existing inhibiting factors and drives them to other touchpoints.

Research limitations/implications – Ideas about the different characteristics of new store formats and their potential to shape the customer experience are extended. New formats reflect innovation in retailing and are part of a retail portfolio which generates different customer expectations and determinants from traditional store formats which provide the customers' existing reference point.

Practical implications – The contributions of new formats should be evaluated in light of other existing formats in the portfolio and not isolated. This is particularly true when considering format cannibalisation and the potentially extended customer journey that arises when customers use traditional format stores and new concept format stores simultaneously.

Originality/value – Previous research, using sales metrics and market-based results as performance determinants, suggests negative outcomes for format diversification. Our study suggests that the contributions of the concept store format should be viewed from an overall customer journey perspective and the "performance" of different format based touchpoints are not best captured through traditional sales evaluation methods.

Keywords Concept store, Retail portfolio, Customer experience, Diversification, IKEA

Paper type Research paper

The research presented in this article was funded by The Swedish Retail and Wholesale Council and would not have been possible without the support of IKEA. The authors would also like to thank Marta Frasquet, Reema Singh and the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful and constructive comments on this article.

1. Introduction

Retailing is undergoing a significant structural transformation. During the last decade or so, we have witnessed the closure of many physical stores (e.g. Grewal *et al.*, 2017; Helm *et al.*, 2018), yet at the same time, some online retailers are opening physical stores and showrooms and many long established retailers continue to supplement their existing store portfolio with new and innovative store formats (e.g. Hultman *et al.*, 2017). This activity suggests that the physical retail store is not "dead" but its role and function in the customer journey is changing.

Retail format development is a crucial part of retail innovation since the store format represents the key point of contact with customers (e.g. Reynolds *et al.*, 2007) and is the place where the majority of customer transactions take place. The reasons for investing in new store formats are diverse but represent a response to a changing retail environment driven by changes in customer behaviours, urbanisation and technological progress (Hultman *et al.*, 2017) and are ways to achieve growth in a challenging retail landscape (e.g. Dawson, 2000; Edelman and Singer, 2015; Verhoef *et al.*, 2015). New formats allow retailers to distinguish themselves from their competitors, to appeal to an existing target market, to attract a new target market (e.g. González-Benito *et al.*, 2005; Levy *et al.*, 2014) or to offer more geographically (e.g. Severin *et al.*, 2001; Jones *et al.*, 2003; Jaravaza and Chitando, 2013) or emotionally accessible locations (e.g. de Lassus and Anido Freire, 2014), increasing the chance of more spontaneous shopping trips and purchases (e.g. Léo and Philippe, 2002).

Research by Rhee and Bell (2002) suggests that a positive customer experience, resulting in store attachment, is linked to a specific retail format and the product assortment offered. Accordingly, retailers are developing store portfolios comprising different types of formats that are tailored to different segments and markets (e.g. Reynolds *et al.*, 2007; Brown, 2010; Sorescu *et al.*, 2011) and which attract customers with different purposes and underlying needs and values (e.g. Jayasankaraprasad and Kathyayani, 2014). For example, while larger out-of-town formats tend to be for planned visits where the customer is looking for a particular product, stores in urban locations often attract more spontaneous shoppers aiming for locational and time convenience, impulsive buying or social experiences (e.g. Jayasankaraprasad and Kathyayani, 2014; Hultman *et al.*, 2017).

The underlying rationale and purpose of new retail store formats is often captured in the nomenclature used to categorise them. Format development is historically related to differences in scale (hyper-, super- and mini-market) or products lines sold (department store, specialist store and category killers) and more recently reflected a more nuanced understanding of customer values and behavioural motives (discount-, convenience- and organic-store). The adoption of customer value based segmentation has seen the emergence of several experience-based store formats, which focus more on the customer relationship with a retailer brand rather than acting as a place of transaction or sales *per se*.

Research has identified several different types of experience-based store formats including themed brand stores (e.g. Sherry, 1998; Borghini *et al.*, 2009), flagship brand stores (Sherry, 1998; Kozinets *et al.*, 2002) and pop-up stores (Niehm *et al.*, 2007; Surchi, 2011; de Lassus and Freire, 2014; Picot-Coupey, 2014; Robertson *et al.*, 2018), all of which emphasise unique, dramatic, engaging, exciting and/or theme-park-like brand experiences, which typically encourage recreational (Kaltcheva and Weitz, 2006) or experiential (Verhoef *et al.*, 2009) shoppers. However, as this study will show, a new kind of experience-based store format has now emerged, one which is not yet well understood by researchers. Closely related to flagship stores and pop-up stores, so-called concept stores are also experience-based retail formats in which direct sales are often not necessarily the immediate goal. The emergence of the concept store relates to the wider appreciation of the customer journey with several associated customer touchpoints along this journey. Previously, the store was primarily the culmination of the customer journey, where the customer physically engaged with the retailer and where transactions took place. The concept store, as will be shown in this article, provides a different—not necessarily transactional role—in the customer journey.

Just like their more exciting siblings, concept stores offer "softer" values such as inspiration, presence, availability and image. However, unlike other experience-based store formats, the concept store is not necessarily a dramatic or exciting place where customers are attracted by the promise of exclusive and exceptional experiences. In fact, concept stores often appear to be rather mundane in terms of the experience presented. They offer customers convenience, accessibility and reassurance rather than drama and exclusivity. This does not just represent a "weaker" version of the experience offered by other experience-based stores but a different kind of experience. This also means that retail managers need to understand how they should effectively evaluate the contribution and performance of these stores and plan for further expansion and/or diversification within the store portolio.

The aim of this article is to better understand concept stores and how they contribute to a diversified retail format portfolio. To fulfil this aim, we performed an exploratory study of international home furnishing giant IKEA's concept stores, which are also called "planning studios". Since direct sales are not necessarily the primary aim in concept stores, evaluating them on the basis of financial productivity (e.g. Dunne and Lusch, 1999; Kumar and Karande, 2000; McGoldrick, 2002; Hernant and Boström, 2010) is not especially illuminating. We, therefore, investigated how a concept store contributes to the customer journey within a retail format portfolio from a customer experience standpoint. Since customer experience is co-created (e.g. Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2003; Chandler and Lusch, 2015; De Keyser *et al.*, 2015; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) we explore the concept store from the perspectives of three different actors in the retail ecosystem and consider to what extent these perspectives are aligned or misaligned. Our findings suggest that concept stores can be understood as a new kind of experience-based store format, one that is conceptually distinct from brand stores, flagship stores, brand museums and pop-up stores. We, hence, contribute to theoretical discussions about retail formats by defining a new format, namely the concept store and clarifying how it differs from other experience-based store formats.

2. Literature review

While there is no established scholarly definition of a concept store, Triki and Hakimi (2017) suggest that they typically include innovative store elements (i.e. creative design and in-store technology) and a limited store assortment consisting of private label items. During our research into concept stores, we have observed that they are not sales generating in the traditional sense and direct sales are not necessarily the immediate goal of the concept store. Instead, they offer something other than sales—namely a wealth of "softer" values such as inspiration, presence, availability and image—which contribute to and build a relationship between the customer and retailer. In this, they are similar to other experience-based store formats such as flagship brand stores, which according to Kozinets *et al.* (2002), aim to reinforce the brand rather than drive profit, or pop-up stores, which focus on communication (Surchi, 2011), brand enhancement (Robertson *et al.*, 2018) and producing demand rather than generating revenue (Ryu, 2011; Picot-Coupey, 2014). However, existing literature describes these experience-based stores as dramatic stages (Kozinets *et al.*, 2002; Picot-Coupey, 2014) offering powerful experiences (Dolbec and Chebat, 2013) of fast-moving consumer goods or luxury brands, which "take the branding concept to an extreme level" (Kozinets *et al.*, 2002, p. 17) and which can work as marketing tools by creating buzz and word-of-mouth (e.g. Marciniak and Budnarowska, 2010; Picot-Coupey, 2014; Klein *et al.*, 2016).

From this we get a glimpse of what is conceptually/theoretically different about concept stores. While most experience-based stores offer recreational (Kaltcheva and Weitz, 2006) or experiential (Verhoef *et al.*, 2009) shoppers hedonic, dramatic, exciting and extraordinary experiences, concept stores are designed and located so that they can inspire and assist task-oriented shoppers with more mundane and practical tasks during their everyday lives.

During our research, we noted that, like other experience-based store formats, concept stores seek to increase brand awareness and positive brand associations. However, they are a broader attempt at format development to support or supplement the whole retail portfolio than flagship stores, which tend to offer unique, theme-park-like experiences in exclusive locations and, hence, are more limited in number (e.g. Kozinets *et al.*, 2002). While they may be somewhat experimental in nature, concept stores are intended as permanent additions to a retail portfolio. This is in contrast to pop-up stores, which are ephemeral in nature and are often established in temporary locations as a low cost way to explore a new market (de Lassus and Freire, 2014; Picot-Coupey, 2014; Warnaby *et al.*, 2015; Klein *et al.*, 2016; Robertson *et al.*, 2018; Henkel and Toporowski, 2021).

In their recent study of the evolution of retail formats, Gauri *et al.* noted that new retail formats should choose between one of two paths: "either (1) reduce friction in the consumer's shopping process or (2) enhance the shopping experience" (2020, p. 8). In other words, they should either make the customer journey easier or more exciting. To date, the experience-based stores conceptualised by retail researchers largely follow the second path. Flagship stores, pop-up stores and brand museums enhance the shopping experience by making it extraordinary (Jahn *et al.*, 2018). As highlighted in empirical studies of American Girl Place (Borghini *et al.*, 2009), Niketown (Sherry, 1998) and ESPN Zone (Sherry *et al.*, 2001), flagship stores are "experiential retail spaces tailored to deliver a powerful brand experience" (Dolbec and Chebat, 2013, p. 460). They are destinations (Kozinets *et al.*, 2002) where recreational shoppers can expect to be excited by interactive extravaganzas featuring relatively fast-moving and low involvement consumer goods such as running shoes, sports or designer dolls (e.g. Sherry, 1998; Sherry *et al.*, 2001; Borghini *et al.*, 2009).

Concept stores, however, tend more towards the first of Gauri *et al.*'s (2020) two suggested paths. Although they are experience-based rather than sales-driven, concept stores seek to inspire rather than to excite by offering task-oriented shoppers a more ordinary shopping experience featuring targeted selections of products (e.g. related to bedrooms or kitchens) in an everyday, geographically accessible (city centre, high street) location, with advice and reassurance provide by informed personnel. They provide an easier alternative to larger, less accessible, out-of-town stores and are noteworthy less for their difference from other high street stores and more for their departure from the usual format offered by that particular retailer. As such they perform a touchpoint role "reducing friction" in the customer experience.

Interesting managerial challenges arise as a result of new investments in format development across a retail store portfolio. While research that uses traditional sales metrics and market-based measures has indicated negative outcomes for format diversification (e.g. Shi *et al.*, 2017), some researchers have attempted to capture the positive effects of format diversification, such as increased sales across channels (Avery *et al.*, 2012) or the positive effects of differentiated store layout and atmosphere in different formats (e.g. Jain and Bagdare, 2009; Van Rompay *et al.*, 2011). Jahn *et al.* demonstrated that soft values, namely differentiated customer experiences from different physical store formats, can be translated into postitive economic outcomes, "such as increased store purchase, cross-channel purchase intention, and brand buzz" (2018, p. 421). However, Jahn *et al.*'s study focused on flagship stores, which as already mentioned, offer a very different kind of customer experience from that offered in concept stores. It is, perhaps, not surprising that dramatic and extraordinary customer experiences can be translated into positive economic outcomes. Experientially-oriented shoppers may be excited enough to pay an entry fee (Hollenbeck *et al.*, 2008) or to accept relatively higher prices (Dolbec and Chebat, 2013) for exclusive products, for the chance to be the first to experience a new brand or product extension (e.g. Robertson *et al.*, 2018), or for the "privilege of learning more about the brand, company, and product" (Borghini *et al.*, 2009, p. 364). But what about experience-based store formats that offer less exciting customer experiences? How should we evaluate their contribution to a retail portfolio?

Understanding the role of the concept store in the wider customer journey is crucial to evaluating their contribution. Concept store customers are unlikely (and often unable) to make cash-and-carry purchases in-store. They might order items for delivery—from retail personnel or independently, in-store or online, in the moment or later on—but they might equally just leave with increased brand awareness, reassurance and positive (or negative) brand associations that will impact their decision making for future purchases. As such, these formats should be perceived (and measured) in respect of the total customer journey. Concept stores are not merely marketing communication tools that seek to create a buzz or a brand connection. They should inspire sales, at some point in the customer journey, but those transactions do not need to occur in-store. Consequently traditional, sales-based, metrics (e.g. Dunne and Lusch, 1999; Kumar and Karande, 2000; McGoldrick, 2002; Hernant and Boström, 2010), provide little understanding of how a concept store might contribute to a wider retail portfolio. And yet evaluation is essential in order to successfully manage these new concept stores. This study seeks to explore this gap by identifying what sort of experience a concept store offers consumers and, hence, how the format contributes to a wider retail store portfolio and the overall customer journey and customer experience.

3. Theoretical perspective

The idea that a customer journey is made up of multiple contacts and touchpoints with a retail organisation – for example with diverse store formats or channels – each of which contributes to the overall customer experience is now widely accepted (e.g. Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Jain and Bagdare, 2009; Verhoef *et al.*, 2009; Bagdare and Jain, 2013; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). It is also recognised that customer experience is co-created (e.g. Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2003; Chandler and Lusch, 2015; De Keyser *et al.*, 2015; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) and cannot be understood in isolation (Verhoef *et al.*, 2009). A customer experience is constructed through emotional, cognitive, social and sensorial components created during the customer journey (e.g. Schmitt, 2003; Verhoef *et al.*, 2009; Homburg *et al.*, 2015; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016), where experiences occur each time the customer interacts with any part of the service, product, store and brand, across various points in time and space (e.g. Zomerdijk and Voss, 2010; Pantano and Viassone, 2015; Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016).

As noted by Van Doorn *et al.* (2010), consumers can engage with a brand or firm through multiple channels, so these channels and interactions have an important role in the customer experience being created. Key decisive moments between the retailer and the customer are known as touchpoints, and specific touchpoints contribute to customer experience in different stages of the customer journey (e.g. Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). The customer journey contains multiple activities (i.e. product search, evaluation, purchase and after-sale behaviour) across channels and is, hence, shaped by a myriad of touchpoints. Particular store formats can represent a key touchpoint in retail, in particular in stores that are purposefully designed to build or reinforce the brand rather than to make direct sales (e.g. Borghini *et al.*, 2009; Jahn *et al.*, 2018).

However, customer experiences are contextually interpreted and unique, meaning that they emerge irrespective of whether a firm recognises and shapes the experience or not (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). An experience is not only created by attributes controlled by the firm, such as the store environment, personnel and the merchandise, but also by attributes beyond their control, such as shopping motivation or the influence of other customers (McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2015) and customer owned devices used in various situations. New formats can also create negative experieces, for example by confusing the customer or not fulfilling customer expectations (e.g. Hultman *et al.*, 2017). It is therefore important to understand if the customer experience that management believes is being generated by a new format (touchpoint) is experienced or perceived in the same way by customers.

When reviewing the literature, we find that the overall customer experience along the whole customer journey seems to be hard to measure. A myriad of metrics take different narrow approaches when evaluating the customer experience (e.g. Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996; Klaus and Maklan, 2012; Schmidt-Subramanian, 2014; Klaus, 2015). Most commonly, satisfaction perceptual metrics based on a single transaction at a specific point in time are used (e.g. Fernandez and Highett-Smith, 2015; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Customer experience measurements that include a multidimensional perspective in order to capture the full experience of the entire customer journey are less prevelant (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). While we do not seek to directly answer Lemon and Verhoef's call for an uncomplicated means of evaluation to determine and measure customer experience at different touchpoints (e.g. Morganosky and Cude, 2000; Bhatnagar and Ratchford, 2004; Verhoef *et al.*, 2015; Hultman *et al.*, 2017; Shi *et al.*, 2017), we hope to highlight some of the factors that might be important in doing so. Our aim is to identify and explore how a concept store format contributes to the customer journey from a customer experience standpoint and, since we recognise experience as co-created, we also examine whether retail managers understand the contribution of this new touchpoint in the same way as their customers do.

4. Method

Our case study is exploratory in nature, meaning that we aim to open discussions about the concept store as a new store format and to make tentative suggestions for future, more conclusive, research. We focus on qualitatively reconnoitring the concept store format, from multiple perspectives: that of customers, industry experts and managers. Non-probability sampling was used to strategically select participants for their characteristics and the insights they possess (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). In this case, that meant either relevant knowledge and experience of the concept store format or extensive knowledge of the retail market and the external determinants fuelling the development of new store formats. Different types of non-probability sampling were then applied depending on the type of source. Consumers were chosen through in-store convenience sampling, business managers were found through snowball sampling, and industry experts were purposively chosen.

We chose to build a case around IKEA's city-centre concept stores for three reasons. First, IKEA's concept store development is unique (Yin, 1994) when considered against the backdrop of its long-term adherence to format consistency. Despite being well-established in numerous countries, IKEA is famous for its loyalty to a single store format—the blue and yellow-box warehouse—with the layout and location of different departments generally being identical in every store (Johansson and Thelander, 2009). However, IKEA is now starting to diversify its store portfolio with urban multi-level full range stores, order and collect outlets, in-city reduced range stores and concept stores such as that under investigation in this study. While it is not uncommon for retailers to open new, smaller "transactional" formats that are similar to their traditional stores, the level of innovation and degree of diversification from the "norm" are relatively high in IKEA's concept stores. They, hence represent a potentially revelatory case (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Second, IKEA represents an instrumental case for exploratory purposes (Yin, 1994). Since IKEA's concept stores in London and Stockholm were launched as recently as 2017, previous studies on IKEA store formats (e.g. Johansson and Thelander, 2009; Jonsson and Foss, 2011; Hultman *et al.*, 2017) have not explored this particular type of format. The chosen case therefore enables us to detect new and valuable insights, which makes it highly suitable as an exploratory device. Third, our choice of industry represents an empirical departure from previous studies of the economic outcomes of customer experience in new format stores. Furniture retail is slower moving and less dramatic than the empirical contexts explored in previous studies of flagship stores—another format designed to build or reinforce the brand rather than to make direct sales (e.g. Sherry, 1998; Sherry *et al.*, 2001; Kozinets *et al.*, 2002; Borghini *et al.*, 2009) and involves higher-priced products that require pre-purchase planning. As highlighted by van Rompay *et al.* (2012), task-oriented shoppers with clear outcomes in mind value different elements of store format than those engaging in more hedonic consumption.

Semi-structured interviews were used to question 26 customers about their experience in three IKEA city-centre concept stores—also called planning studios—in London ($n = 9$) and Stockholm ($n = 17$) and what role their visit to the concept store played in their customer journeys. A planning studio concept store is much smaller in size than a traditional IKEA warehouse store and is dedicated to one product category—in this case kitchen (Stockholm) and kitchen and bedroom (London). These sites were selected because of geographical closeness and access. However, they are also good examples of the concept store format where customers can plan and order but not buy products in store. They are stores in the sense that customers can find inspiration, plan, decide and order but they cannot make direct purchases and they do not take products with them from the store. Anything the customer orders and purchases from the store is home delivered. As a customer, you can walk in and look but the idea is to book time with planning staff to get advice and help. A summary comparison between IKEA's city-centre concept stores and their traditional warehouse store format can be found in Table 1.

We also interviewed seven managers at IKEA (different countries) as well as three industry experts. The interviews were coupled with internal documentation in order to increase our understanding of how management felt that these new formats contributed to the retail portfolio. Participants were encouraged to think freely and to base their answers on personal experience and interviewers emphasised that there was no "right" answer. For example, managers were encouraged to not only describe how new format stores *are* managed, but also how they *should* be managed.

Our prime objective is not to generalise but, instead, to create a thick and credible (Geertz, 1973) description of how concept stores (theoretically) differ from other experience-based store formats and how a concept store can (practically) contribute to a retail portfolio from a customer experience perspective. IKEA's journey from traditional (sales based) formats to new (relationship building) formats, will not be identical to that undertaken by other retailers. Nevertheless, it includes decisions and balances that other firms should consider in their own format development journeys.

City-centre concept stores	Traditional (yellow box) warehouse stores
500–1,000 m^2	20,000 m^2 or more
Urban location	Out-of-town location
One or two product categories	Numerous categories
Orders placed online with personnel	Largely self-service
Personnel available for brief questions	Personnel available for brief questions
Showrooms and inspiration in focus	Inspiration areas for all product categories
No products for take-home purchase	Large assortment of large and small items
Screens and tablets for inspiration and orders	Digital screens with product information
Self-service computers for planning	Self-service computers for product info
Calmness and space	"Maze" layout to guide the customer
Co-creation areas for interaction with	Restaurant, food market and kids' playroom
No cash payment allowed	Most payment types accepted

Table 1. Comparison between IKEA's concept stores and traditional warehouse stores

5. Findings

In this section we will present our findings on how concept stores contribute to a retail portfolio from a customer experience standpoint. Concept stores are a relatively new format development for IKEA and, as such, their role in the overall customer journey and their contribution to an increasingly diversified retail store portfolio are not always evident. In any new format development a misalignment may arise between what the organisation is presenting to the market and how the market (customer) perceives it and an assessment of this provides an indication of how the format is experienced and fits into the overall customer journey. When analysing our empirical material, it became clear that the expectations of customers, managers and experts with respect to this new retail format were not always aligned. Since it is not within a retailer's ability to completely control the customer experience and since new formats can create negative as well as positive experiences, it is important to understand if the customer experience that managers and experts believe to be generated by a new format is experienced or perceived in the same way by customers. With this in mind, when identifying the factors generating the customer experiences and perceptions of the concept store, we will also focus on comparing the differing perspectives of the various actors in our study, highlighting both alignments and misalignments between how each group understands the ways in which the concept store format contributes to the customer journey and its role in the retail portfolio. In the following short sections, we will elaborate on which of our findings represent aligned perspectives and which represent misaligned perspectives. These findings are summarised in Table 2.

5.1 Aligned perspectives: accessibilty, awareness, inspiration and new touchpoints

As highlighted in previous research (e.g. Jain and Bagdare, 2009; Verhoef *et al.*, 2009; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016), consumers today are exercising greater influence on the retail experience as a whole. The customers, industry experts and managers

Alignments	Misalignments
Accessibility *Customers, managers and experts agreed that city-centre concept stores are an important tool for increasing market penetration because of their favourable location*	Differentiated experience *While managers and experts worried about consistency of format and product offering (compared to the traditional store), customers emphasised that a differentiated experience attracted them to concept stores*
Awareness *Adding new touchpoints (in the form of concept stores) attracts customers that would otherwise have bought from a competitor*	Relative accessibility *How accessible customers perceive the concept store to be (in terms of location) depends on the relative size of the city in which it is located. Managers and experts did not seem to consider this factor*
Inspiration *Customers visit concept stores to find inspiration or for an appointment. They were not upset that they could not make direct purchases in-store*	Access to personnel *Lack of evening and drop-in appointments made concept-store personnel seem inaccessible to customers. Meanwhile, managers suggest that availability of personnel in concept stores is higher than in traditional stores*
New touchpoints *Concept store customers add new digital touchpoints to their journey by ordering online during or after a visit*	Traditional touchpoints *Managers hoped concept stores would entice new customers to visit traditional stores but concept-store customers were generally unwilling to do so*

Table 2.
Alignments and misalignments

interviewed as part of this study all echoed this sentiment from their own particular point of view. Both managers and experts explained that customers want accessibility, not least because today many urban dwellers do not own cars. And in line with studies suggesting that store location is the most important factor for consumers when choosing where to make their purchase (e.g. Severin *et al.*, 2001; Jones *et al.*, 2003; Jaravaza and Chitando, 2013), time-poor consumers indicated that they do not have the time or inclination to visit a traditional out-of-town IKEA store. Instead, as also noted by Hultman *et al.* (2017) in their study on format development of IKEA in Germany, they visited the city-centre stores during their lunch breaks and, thus, the concept store can be seen as a new accessible touchpoint on a diversified customer journey. For example, Henrik, explained that he had not visited a traditional IKEA store for several years because of its location. "*I do not have time to go back and forth because of work*". He went on to state that had the concept store not been located in the city centre, he would not have purchased an IKEA kitchen:

> I looked at a kitchen from another company here in the city, and I think I would've bought it from them if this store was not available since it would have been a much smoother process. (Henrik)

Managers and customers used differing terminology to describe the location generated advantages of the concept store but this, nevertheless, indicates an alignment in perspectives. Customers referred to the urban location of the concept stores in terms of accessibility, availability and increased awareness. Managers translated this into increased market penetration and competitiveness and indicated that these would be the outcome of offering new touchpoints that captured customers with changing needs. By penetration they referred to attracting new customers as well as latent customers (i.e. those who have not visited IKEA for several years). The city-centre concept store seems, hence, to be an important tool for increasing penetration through increased awareness and availability. This became apparent during interviews in London, where customers described how they walked past when shopping for similar products and subsequently considered buying a kitchen from IKEA.

> I'm here today to get inspiration for a kitchen we're helping our son to purchase, but I was not necessary planning to visit IKEA today. I live nearby and was running some errands in the area, passed the store, and thought I might as well have a look. I like the store and it's very practical for these kind of situations. (Gabrielle)

Hence, in line with previous research (e.g. Jayasankaraprasad and Kathyayani, 2014; Hultman *et al.*, 2017), including studies of luxury pop-up stores (e.g. Picot-Coupey, 2014; Klein *et al.*, 2016), IKEA could be seen as successfully attracting spontaneous and formerly latent customers due to the favourable locations and wider geographical accessibility of their concept stores.

Adding new touchpoints (in the form of new store formats) in the customer journey also seems to improve competitiveness, as new format stores can creating a positive experience for customers (e.g. Jain and Bagdare, 2009). Part of IKEA's strategy of opening stores in city centres includes responding to increased competition. Consumers in both London and Stockholm expressed, in line with the following quote from Sven, that if IKEA did not have a city-centre store, they probably would have bought a kitchen from a competitor instead.

> The store is awesome. I do not have the energy nor the desire to visit any of the big stores. It's just too tiresome; too big, takes too much time and there is just people everywhere creating a mess. I would seriously not buy a kitchen from IKEA in the future if I had to do the planning over there, haha. Like, if this store was not available. (Sven)

Hence, in contrast to Shi *et al.* (2017), who found negative results for format diversification in terms of reduced competitiveness, our findings indicate that diversification into city-centre locations with a differentiated offer actually allows IKEA to maintain competitiveness while attracting latent customers by providing a positive the customer experience, mainly because the format diversification provided a new touchpoint to the customer journey. There are overlaps here with research that found pop-up stores also tend to be strategically located in accessible, high trafficked areas (Surchi, 2011), comprise a different product assortment from their parent stores, and display innovativeness and in merchandising and layout (Picot-Coupey, 2014).

Besides an attractive location, both existing customers and latent customers described concept stores as a source of inspiration. Managers at IKEA explained that the concept of the store should be clearly stated in order to avoid customers being disappointed that they cannot purchase products directly in store. However, in line with findings from previous research (Van Rompay *et al.*, 2011), customers who visited the store with the intention of finding inspiration or for a booked planning appointment (i.e. task-oriented shoppers) knew what to expect in terms of the niche product category showcased and were not upset by not being able to purchase products directly. They understood that the concept store had a particular purpose and role and was not a traditional sales focused outlet. This is highlighted in the following quote from Lydia who was visiting the London store for her first planning session.

> It's like. . . right now the purpose is to plan a kitchen so It's not like you want loads of people coming in and buying napkins. So maybe it would just end up being people everywhere. And also I would just get really distracted, and I do not really want to get distracted by straws or napkins haha. (Lydia)

In order to access IKEA's full range of products, customers at the concept stores need to order online—i.e. to engage with another touchpoint to complete the customer journey. When ordering, some customers add products that are not necessarily related to the kitchen or storage solution planned. Some add items to their online basket via their mobile devices as they stroll around the store while others take photos of inspiring items so that they can look them up (and perhaps order) later. Visiting the concept store, therefore, appears to motivate customers, like Henrik, to add digital touchpoints to their journey, which in turn may result in increased sales.

> I've a basket that's open in the phone so that I can add things beyond the things I've planned with the personnel. I can simply add those things to the same basket so that the delivery is quicker. So, it is not just kitchen things I've added but also some things for my bathroom and so on. It's great because I can add things when I'm home as well, eh like, I do not necessarily have to do it during an appointment. (Henrik)

The cross-channel effects of format diversification are not often discussed in research on experience-based stores, which focus more on the emotions generated by new formats, e.g. excitement (Kozinets *et al.*, 2002), connection (Hollenbeck *et al.*, 2008; Dolbec and Chebat, 2013), engagement (Borghini *et al.*, 2009). However, our findings may complement Jahn *et al.*'s (2018) suggestion that a favourable retail experience in a flagship brand store increases customer intention to purchase the brand in other channels. Our finding that a concept store visit motivates customers to add digital touchpoints to their customer journey is also in line with work by Avery *et al.* (2012) suggesting that a format portfolio consisting of both online and bricks and mortar channels, can benefit from increased cross-channel sales when a new physical store format is introduced.

5.2 Misaligned perspectives: differentiated experience, relative accessibility, access to personnel and traditional touchpoints

An apparent misalignment between the managerial and customer perspective refers to the way in which the customer experiences the concept store environment and, more specifically, how that experience differs from what they would have found in a traditional store. The atmosphere in the concept stores is one of the major contributions of the format to the customer experience, according to customers. Several customers emphasised how the differentiated touchpoint was a crucial part of their journey and heavily influenced the customer experience and, therefore, also their purchase intention. For example, the calmness and space of the concept store in comparison with the crowded maze-layout in the traditional store format was emphasised, with customers explaining that the concept store felt like a "better" version of IKEA. This is in line with findings suggesting that luxury pop-up stores appeal to customers who find traditional luxury stores "daunting" (Robertson *et al.*, 2018). Our findings differ somewhat in that IKEA customers are attracted to the new concept store format because they are daunted by the traditional warehouse store's noise, crowds and stress, rather than by the high prices, unwelcoming staff and imposing doormen found at traditional luxury brand stores (de Lassus and Freire, 2014). While pop-up luxury stores are experienced as less exclusive than their parent stores, IKEA concept stores seem to be experienced as more exclusive than the traditional store format.

This suggests that it is perhaps not as important as has been previously suggested (Hultman *et al.*, 2017) to portray the brand in a consistent way across all formats, but rather that differences between the various touchpoints in this study—i.e. between new format store and traditional stores—were understood and perceived by customers as positive, indicating possible implications for market penetration and revived corporate image. While the importance of the store layout and atmospheric factors has been highlighted in earlier research (Jain and Bagdare, 2009; Van Rompay *et al.*, 2011), none of the managers we interviewed acknowledged this as a potential benefit of format diversification. Instead they emphasised the challenges of diversification—namely the potential problems of not offering the whole IKEA experience, the full product assortment and the opportunity to buy and take home products.

As mentioned earlier, diversifying store formats has led to more geographically accessible touchpoints on IKEA customer journeys. However, there were issues raised about how accessible city-centre stores were perceived to be. One difference arises from the relative size of the cities in question; hence, we refer to this misalignment as *relative accessibility*. Whereas the location of concept stores was clearly appreciated by Stockholmers, a slightly different view emerged when interviewing customers in London. In line with previous research by Léo and Philippe (2002), city-centre concept stores give customers a touchpoint that is accessible in relation to the working day—i.e. during their lunch breaks or while commuting. Nevertheless, London's size appears to undermine the value of the central location of the concept store, as compared with Stockholm, a more compact city. Several customers expressed how the differences between the traditional store format and the concept store in terms of geographical proximity and accessibility are less apparent since they work and live in dispersed areas of London. For example, Samantha explained that the city-centre planning store is conveniently located in relation to her workplace but less so in relation to her partner's workplace. They go together to a traditional, out-of-town, IKEA warehouse (in Wembley) so they can attend a kitchen planning session together.

> So I work around the corner, but it's probably more convenient to go to the store in Wembley for the actual planning as we then can go together late at night, which is more suitable as we have two young children. Also, my husband works across town so it would take him quite some time to commute here anyway. (Samantha)

A third area of misalignment relates to the accessibility of personnel in the city-centre concept stores. In traditional IKEA store formats, customers can schedule planning appointments in the evening and drop-in appointments are also available. This is not the case in IKEA's concept stores. Several customers mentioned that they experienced this inaccessabilty to personnel as a disadvantage, as emphasised by Linus in the following quote:

> I wasn't expecting the access to personnel to be so limited. Like, you enter the store and then they expect you to do everything on your own. It would've been great if you could get help with smaller things straight away, as it is now it appears as if you've to book an appointment even for the smallest things. If I'm paying thousands, I expect good service from beginning to end. (Linus)

Furthermore, while managers suggested that the availability of personnel—measured in terms of staff levels per customer or sales space—in concept stores is greater than in traditional stores, customers in Stockholm stated that they would like better accessibility to personnel to help them with smaller issues. Hence, even though the concept store is placed in a geographically accessible city-centre location, the lack of accessibility to store personnel means that customers do not necessarily recognise it as a more accessible touchpoint on their journey. Managers appear to have knowledge about the level of accessibility needed in order to "compete" with the traditional store format. As pointed out by customers in both Stockholm and London, location appears to be secondary in favour of the store format environment when creating format loyalty. This is in line with previous research by Rhee and Bell (2002). This study can therefore confirm that customer experience is linked to the specific format and the product assortment offered, highlighting the need to not just offer customers a diverse retail portfolio but one that includes the kind of formats that satisfy their changing needs.

Based on interviews with managers from IKEA, it became clear that, for them, the contribution of the new store formats resides in their ability to respond to changing customer behaviours. Market penetration and increased sales are seen as consequences of a successful response. However, while latent customers show a willingness to adopt new digital touchpoints based on interactions with the concept store format, they do not appear to be as willing to expand their journey to physically include the traditional store format. For example, previously latent customers in both London and Stockholm emphasised how they would only visit the traditional store if absolutely necessary (e.g. due to limited appointments available in the concept store) and perhaps not even then. This indicates that the appeal of the concept store format is different from the appeal of other kinds of experience-based store formats. While other experience-based store formats attract customers with exciting and dramatic experiences, concept stores reduce friction in the customer journey. IKEA concept stores replace otherwise undesirable touchpoints—namely the noisy, crowded, confusing IKEA warehouse store—and, hence, attract new and latent customers with a more appealing and relevant customer journey. It is important to note that this finding contrasts with the stated objectives of IKEA managers, who hope that a good experience with a new store format will attract new customers to both traditional stores and the website.

6. Discussion

The aim, through this explorative case study of the IKEA showroom concept store, was to contribute to our understanding of how concept stores (theoretically) differ from other experience-based store formats and how a concept store can (practically) contribute to a retail store portfolio serving the customer journey. We approached this from a customer experience perspective grounded in the views of three different groups of actors. Our findings highlight a number of interlinked issues for future research. First, the need to clarify how concept stores relate to other experienced-based store formats; second, the need for a common understanding of the way consumers perceive such formats and how their perceptions and associated use of the format feed into the wider consumer journey; and third the need to re-assess the metrics used to evaluate the contribution of these formats.

A starting point for understanding the implications of new behaviours associated with concept stores is to clarify how they differ from other experience-based store formats, such as brand stores, pop-up stores, flagship brand stores and brand museums. Our findings offer a theoretical contribution by empirically defining this new store format. As detailed in Table 3, the concept store format differs from theoretical descriptions of other experience-based store formats in several respects. There are, however, some similarities between the formats. For example, flagship stores and some pop-up stores also prioritise softer values, such as inspiration, over sales and profit generation, and pop-up stores may also be located in high-traffic and geographically accessible locations. Moreover, all experience-based stores offer a different kind of experience from their parent stores, due to their differentiated assortment and atmosphere as well as merchandising innovations. There are also important differences, the most important being in the kind of experience offered. While concept stores may be inspirational, they offer neither the dramatic, extraordinary and exciting experiences of flagship stores and themed brand stores, the emotional connection expected at brand museums, nor the novelty and exclusivity offered by pop-up stores. Concept stores further differ from pop-up stores in that the former are not temporary in nature. Concept stores are intended to be permanent features in a diversified retail portfolio rather than an ephemeral or experimental format strategy. This has implications for theory because, while pop-up stores, like flagship stores, aim first and foremost to create a spectacular and exciting brand experience and, hence, a "buzz" around the brand, concept stores need to prove their worth over the long term. The expense of a pop-up store might be written off as a one-off marketing cost but the concept store must be evaluated to show that it is earning its place in the retail portfolio, even if it does not do so by generating direct, cash-and-carry sales in the physical premises.

Jahn *et al.* differentiate between non-experiential retail stores, where there is more focus on "selling a product at a profit" (2018, p. 415) and experiential brand stores, in which the focus is on reinforcing the brand. Our findings suggest that the concept store format does not necessarily follow this either/or distinction and, hence, represents a conceptual departure. Concept stores do not focus on reinforcing the brand using drama and excitement but neither is their focus on selling product at a profit. Instead the aim is to create a physical store that reduces friction in the customer journey (e.g. Gauri *et al.*, 2020) by removing inconveniences associated with other formats in the retail portfolio. The concept store format, hence, represents a hybrid in discussions of store formats. It is neither fully experiential in the sense that it is not only about marketing communications nor is it sales or profit-focused. Its aim is to be an accessible touchpoint on a diversified customer journey with its value to the retail portfolio being that it attracts new and latent customers, removes inconveniences and supports the customer journey and drives them to other, in this case mainly digital, touchpoints.

It is noticeable, perhaps inevitably, that when discussing the customer experience and role of concept stores in the customer journey, customers explain their views from a different perspective than managers and industry experts. Customers referred to the urban location of the concept stores in terms of accessibility, availability and increased awareness, whereas from a management perspective the location was seen as a way of increasing market penetration and competitiveness. Similarly, the customer focus on inspiration, ideas and a calm environment translates into assumptions of cross-selling and supporting store sales from a management perspective. When considering the image of the retailer, the management perspective focuses on concerns about brand consistency—that customers will expect a traditional store with an expanded range and products to purchase—although consumers could readily distinguish between formats and understood and appreciated the differentiated experience in these different formats. At one level these differences may be explained by the different motivations of consumers and retail management and it could be argued that the expectations of the latter are essentially a representation of the outcomes of the former, but the terminology may also illustrate a potential discord between the two which then potentially permeates into how these stores are seen to contribute to the customer journey

Table 3. How concept stores differ from other experience-based store formats

Store format	Aims to. . .	Type of customer	Duration	Assortment	Direct sales?	Location	Atmosphere	Aims for profit?	References
Concept store	Inspire	Task-oriented	Permanent	Limited selection of own-brand	No	Accessible	Ordinary	No	Triki and Hakimi (2017)
Flagship brand store	Entertain	Experiential	Permanent	Extensive selection of own-brand	Yes	Desirable	Extraordinary	No	Sherry (1998), Sherry *et al.* (2001), Kozinets *et al.* (2002), Dolbec and Chebat (2013)
(Themed) Brand store	Entertain	Experiential	Permanent	Extensive selection of own-brand	Yes	Desirable	Extraordinary	Yes	Sherry *et al.* (2001), Borghini *et al.* (2009), Dolbec and Chebat (2013)
Pop-up store	Communicate "buzz" or gather market intelligence (May also be transactional)	Experiential	Temporary	Limited selection	Yes	Variable*	Ephemeral	Yes/ No*	Surchi (2011), de Lassus and Anido Freire (2014), Picot-Coupey (2014), Warnaby *et al.* (2015), Klein *et al.* (2016), Robertson *et al.* (2018), Henkel and Toporowski (2021)
Brand museum	Document and educate	Experiential	Permanent	Limited selection of merchandise entry tickets	Yes	Destination	Exciting	Yes	Hollenbeck *et al.* (2008)

Note(s): *A pop-up store that seeks to test a new market may be located in a high-traffic shopping area while one that tries to create a buzz, especially one that sells luxury goods, is more likely to be found in an prestigious location (e.g. Surchi, 2011; Picot-Coupey, 2014; Robertson *et al.*, 2018). The aim of the pop-up store also affects whether it aims to make a profit or not. In existing markets, pop-up stores might be transactional—e.g. aiming to maximise seasonal or event-related sales or to sell off old stock (Warnaby *et al.*, 2015; Henkel and Toporowski, 2021)—but in new markets, brand awareness and buzz may be more important than profit (Robertson *et al.*, 2018) and how their contribution in assessed. The "language" (and underlying perceptions) of the managerial discourse seem to be fixed in a transactional, financial performance related, narrative.

In terms of the total customer journey, it appears that all customers used the concept store format for initial inspiration, and customers then finalised their purchases either by placing the order in the concept store or in a traditional store. The website was further used as a complement for product information and inspiration. However, while all customers emphasised an improved customer experience, the financial outcomes for the retailer differs and is not always positive. Notably, the concept store format primarily appears to attract existing or latent customers—who either abandon the traditional store format or use it as a complement—rather than new customers. Consequently, a degree of sales cannibalisation rather than expansion may occur. Future research that maps these new customer journeys and associated touchpoints in detail across formats and channels would provide a better understanding of the implications of new behaviours associated with concept stores and highlight potential improvements in the overall customer experience (for example the issues of personnel and time accessibility highlighted by customers in the new concept stores).

Although not explored in detail, the perspectives of customers, managers and industry experts, allow us to conclude that the contribution and performance of the concept store format are not best captured solely through traditional sales evaluation methods. The metrics currently used by retailers, such as sales per square metre, conversion rate, total market growth, average ticket, regional sales metrics and customer satisfaction metrics applied to specific stores, are not able to capture the complexity of the customer experience in new store formats and the new and differentiated behaviours, interlinked touchpoints and customer journeys that they inspire. It would, hence, be beneficial to look beyond traditional metrics, when evaluating, to determine what kind of behaviours the concept store format prompts and how those behaviours relate to other formats in the portfolio. By doing so, cross-format mobility and the relative role (and value) of new store formats in inspiring purchases in other channels can be determined.

7. Conclusion

Ideas about the different types and characteristics of experience-based store formats and their potential to shape the customer journey have been extended by this study. These new formats are part of a diversified retail store portfolio and they generate different customer expectations and determinants than traditional store formats which provide the existing reference point for customers. These experience-based formats, including the concept store format, often have a less direct transactional role within the overall customer journey. Through our analysis we have concluded, in this IKEA case, that inspiration, concept- and store-clarity, format and channel synergies, accessibility (to personnel, location and opening hours) and the in-store environment are factors that are influential in shaping the customer experience in a concept store and by extension within the overall customer journey. These factors do not necessarily need to excite to engage the customer but may do so by removing inhibiting factors and reducing friction in the existing customer journey.

Our findings also illustrate that the contributions of new formats should be evaluated in the light of other existing formats in the portfolio and not in isolatation. This is particularly true when considering format cannibalisation and the potentially extended customer journey that arises when customers use traditional format stores and new concept format stores simultaneously. All physical formats have associated cost structures and how these costs relate to revenue generation needs further more nuanced consideration. For example, retailers could determine the customer's total number of touchpoints in the purchasing process and then compare these findings to the financial outcomes related to the new format store in order to evaluate its performance.

While our study has highlighted some indicators of the role of these new store formats in customer experience journeys, there is still a need for more research. Current research on store formats and the customer experience of store formats tends to be focused on individual formats as an entity in their own right, rather than as a contributing touchpoint on an overall customer journey as part of a transaction process rather than a transaction point. We do not yet know whether the new store formats we have seen so far are merely a first step towards a more advanced home furnishing customer journey or whether they represent the final steps in the journey. And what roles do other touchpoints and channels play in relation to the concept stores and the traditional physical store? There are indications that concept stores are an attractive touchpoint but, due to the nature of the format and a physical location, but currently very few of the customers in a given market may access these new store formats, making them a contact point for just a chosen few.

References

Avery, J., Steenburgh, T.J., Deighton, J. and Caravella, M. (2012), "Adding bricks to clicks: predicting the patterns of cross-channel elasticities over time", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 76 No. 3, pp. 96-111.

Bagdare, S. and Jain, R. (2013), "Measuring retail customer experience", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 41 No. 10, pp. 790-804, doi: 10.1108/IJRDM-08-2012-0084.

Bhatnagar, A. and Ratchford, B. (2004), "A model of retail format competition for non-durable goods", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 39-59.

Borghini, S., Diamond, N., Kozinets, R.V., McGrath, M.A., Muñiz, A.M. and Sherry, J.F. (2009), "Why are themed brandstores so powerful? Retail brand ideology at American Girl place", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 85 No. 3, pp. 363-375, doi: 10.1016/J.JRETAI.2009.05.003.

Brown, J.R. (2010), "Managing the retail format portfolio: an application of modern portfolio theory", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 19-28.

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2015), *Business Research Methods*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Chandler, J.D. and Lusch, R.F. (2015), "Service systems: a broadened framework and research agenda on value propositions, engagement, and service experience", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 6-22.

Dawson, J. (2000), "Retailing at century end: some challenges for management and research", *The International Review of Retail Distribution and Consumer Research*, The Intern, No. 2, pp. 119-148.

De Keyser, A., Lemon, K.N., Klaus, P. and Keiningham, T.L. (2015), *A Framework for Understanding and Managing the Customer Experience*, Vol. 15 No. 121.

de Lassus, C. and Anido Freire, N. (2014), "Access to the luxury brand myth in pop-up stores: a netnographic and semiotic analysis", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Pergamon, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 61-68, doi: 10.1016/J.JRETCONSER.2013.08.005.

de Lassus, C. and Freire, N.A. (2014), "Access to the luxury brand myth in pop-up stores: a netnographic and semiotic analysis", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Elsevier, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 61-68, doi: 10.1016/j.jretconser.2013.08.005.

Dolbec, P.-Y. and Chebat, J.-C. (2013), "The impact of a flagship vs. a brand store on brand attitude, brand attachment and brand equity", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 89 No. 4, pp. 460-466.

Dunne, P. and Lusch, R.F. (1999), *Retailing*, 3rd ed., Dryden Press, Orlando.

Edelman, D. and Singer, M. (2015), "Competing on customer journeys", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 93 No. 11, pp. 88-100.

Fernandez, A. and Highett-Smith, R. (2015), *Customer Satisfaction v Customer Experience*, Melbourne.

Gauri, D.K., Jindal, R., Ratchford, B., Fox, E., Bhatnagar, A., Pandey, A., Navallo, J.R., Fogarty, J., Carr, S. and Howerton, E. (2020), "Evolution of retail formats: past, present, and future", *Journal of Retailing*, New York University, Vol. 41 No. 10, pp. 790-804, doi: 10.1016/j.jretai.2020.11.002.

Geertz, C. (1973), *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture*, Basic Books, New York, pp. 3-30.

González-Benito, O., Muñoz-Gallego, P.A. and Kopalle, P.K. (2005), "Asymmetric competition in retail store formats: evaluating inter- and intra-format spatial effects", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 81 No. 1, pp. 59-73.

Grewal, D., Roggeveen, A.L. and Nordfält, J. (2017), "The future of retailing", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 93 No. 1, pp. 1-6, doi: 10.1016/j.jretai.2016.12.008.

Helm, S., Kim, S.H. and Van Riper, S. (2018), "Navigating the "retail apocalypse": a framework of consumer evaluations of the new retail landscape", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 54, doi: 10.1016/J.JRETCONSER.2018.09.015.

Henkel, L. and Toporowski, W. (2021), "Hurry up! the effect of pop-up stores' ephemerality on consumers' intention to visit", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Pergamon, Vol. 58, p. 102278, doi: 10.1016/J.JRETCONSER.2020.102278.

Hernant, M. and Boström, M. (2010), *Lönsamhet i Butik*, Liber, Malmö.

Hollenbeck, C.R., Peters, C. and Zinkhan, G.M. (2008), "Retail spectacles and brand meaning: insights from a brand museum case study", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 84, pp. 334-353, doi: 10.1016/j.jretai.2008.05.003.

Homburg, C., Jozic, D. and Kuehnl, C. (2015), "Customer experience management: toward implementing an evolving marketing concept", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*.

Hultman, J., Johansson, U., Wispeler, A. and Wolf, L. (2017), "Exploring store format development and its influence on store image and store clientele – the case of IKEA's development of an inner-city store format', the International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research", *Routledge*, Vol. 27 No. 3, pp. 227-240, doi: 10.1080/09593969.2017.1314867.

Jahn, S., Nierobisch, T., Toporowski, W. and Dannewald, T. (2018), "Selling the extraordinary in experiential retail stores", *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 412-24.

Jain, R. and Bagdare, S. (2009), "Determinants of customer experience in new format retail stores", *Journal of Marketing and Communication*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 34-44.

Jaravaza, D.C. and Chitando, P. (2013), "The role of store location in influencing customers' store choice", *Journal of Emerging Trends in Economics and Management Sciences*, Vol. 4 No. 3, pp. 302-307.

Jayasankaraprasad, C. and Kathyayani, G. (2014), "Cross-format shopping motives and shopper typologies for grocery shopping: a multivariate approach", *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 79-115.

Johansson, U. and Thelander, Å. (2009), "A standardised approach to the world? IKEA in China", *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 199-219.

Jones, M.A., Mothersbaugh, D.L. and Beatty, S.E. (2003), "The effects of locational convenience on customer repurchase intentions across service types", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 7, p. 701.

Jonsson, A. and Foss, N.J. (2011), "International expansion through flexible replication: learning from the internationalization experience of IKEA", *Journal of International Business Studies. Palgrave*, Vol. 42 No. 9, pp. 1079-1102, doi: 10.1057/jibs.2011.32.

Kaltcheva, V.D. and Weitz, B.A. (2006), "When should a retailer create an exciting store environment?", *Journal of Marketing*, SAGE Publications, Los Angeles, CA, Vol. 70 No. 1, pp. 107-118, doi: 10.1509/jmkg.70.1.107.qxd.

Klaus, P. (2015), *Measuring Customer Experience: How to Develop and Execute the Most Profitable Customer Experience Strategies*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Klaus, P. and Maklan, S. (2012), "EXQ: a multiple-item scale for assessing service experience", *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 5-33.

Klein, J.F., Falk, T., Esch, F.R. and Gloukhovtsev, A. (2016), "Linking pop-up brand stores to brand experience and word of mouth: the case of luxury retail", *Journal of Business Research*, Elsevier, Vol. 69 No. 12, pp. 5761-5767, doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.172.

Kozinets, R.V., Sherry, J.F., DeBerry-Spence, B., Duhacheck, A., Nuttavuthisita, K. and Storm, D. (2002), "Themed flagship brand stores in the new millennium: theory, practice, prospects", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 78, pp. 17-29.

Kumar, V. and Karande, K. (2000), "The effect of retail store environment on retailer performance", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 49 No. 2, pp. 167-181.

Léo, P.Y. and Philippe, J. (2002), "Retail centres: location and consumer's satisfaction", *The Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 122-146.

Lemon, K. and Verhoef, P. (2016), "Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 80 No. 6, pp. 69-96.

Levy, M., Weitz, B. and Grewal, D. (2014), *Retailing Management*, 9th ed., McGraw Hill, New York.

Marciniak, R. and Budnarowska, C. (2010), "Marketing approaches to pop-up stores: exploration of social networking", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 42 No. 7, available at: http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/15678/2/EAERCD_2009_Marciniak_%26_Budnarowska.pdf (accessed 26 March 2021).

McColl-Kennedy, J., Gustafsson, A., Jaakkola, E., Klaus, P., Radnor, Z., Perks, H. and Friman, M. (2015), "Fresh perspectives on customer experience", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 29 Nos 6/7, pp. 430-435.

McGoldrick, P. (2002), *Retail Marketing*, 2nd ed., McGraw-Hill, New York.

Morganosky, M.A. and Cude, B.J. (2000), "Large format retailing in the US: a consumer experience perspective", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 7 No. 4, pp. 215-222.

Niehm, L.S., Fiore, A.M., Jeong, M. and Kim, H.-J. (2007), "Pop-up retail's acceptability as an innovative business strategy and enhancer of the consumer shopping experience", *Journal of Shopping Center Research*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 1-30.

Pantano, E. and Viassone, M. (2015), "Engaging consumers on new integrated multichannel retail settings: challenges for retailers", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 25, pp. 106-114.

Picot-Coupey, K. (2014), "The pop-up store as a foreign operation mode (FOM) for retailers", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 42 No. 7, pp. 643-670, doi: 10.1108/IJRDM-01-2013-0032.

Pine, B.J. and Gilmore, J.H. (1998), "Welcome to the experience economy", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 76 No. 4, pp. 97-105, doi: Article.

Prahalad, C.K. and Ramaswamy, V. (2003), "The new frontier of experience innovation", *MIT Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 44 No. 4, p. 12.

Reynolds, J., Howard, E., Cuthbertson, C. and Hristov, L. (2007), "Perspectives on retail format innovation: relating theory and practice", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 35 No. 8, pp. 647-660.

Rhee, H. and Bell, D.R. (2002), "The inter-store mobility of supermarket shoppers", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 78 No. 4, pp. 225-237.

Robertson, T.S., Gatignon, H. and Cesareo, L. (2018), "Pop-ups, ephemerality, and consumer experience: the centrality of buzz", *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 425-439.

Ryu, J.S. (2011), "Consumer attitudes and shopping intentions toward pop-up fashion stores", *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, Taylor & Francis Group, Vol. 2 No. 3, pp. 139-147, doi: 10.1080/20932685.2011.10593092.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2009), *Research Methods for Business Students*, 5th ed., Pearson Education, Harlow.

Schmidt-Subramanian, M. (2014), *The State of Voice of the Customer Programs, 2014: It's Time to Act.*

Schmitt, B. (2003), *Customer Experience Management: A Revolutionary Approach to Connecting with Your Customers*, The Free Press, New York.

Severin, V., Louviere, J.J. and Finn, A. (2001), "The stability of retail shopping choices over time and across countries", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 77 No. 2, pp. 185-202.

Sherry, J.F. Jr (1998), "The soul of the company store: Nike Town Chicago and the emplaced brandscape", in Sherry, J.F.Jr (Ed.), *Serviscapes: The Concept of Place in Contemporary Markets*, NTC Business Books, Lincolnwood, IL, pp. 109-146.

Sherry, J.F., Kozinets, R.V., Storm, D., Duhacheck, A., Nuttavuthisita, K. and DeBerry-Spence, B. (2001), "Being in the Zone", *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Sage Publications, Vol. 30 No. 4, pp. 465-510, doi: 10.1177/089124101030004005.

Shi, Y., Lim, J., Weitz, B. and France, S. (2017), "The impact of retail format diversification on retailers' financial performance", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 46 No. 1, pp. 147-167.

Sorescu, A., Frambach, R., Sing, J., Rangaswamy, A. and Bridges, C. (2011), "Innovations in retail business models", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 87 No. 1, pp. 3-16.

Stein, A. and Ramaseshan, B. (2016), "Towards the identification of customer experience touch point elements", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 30, pp. 8-19.

Surchi, M. (2011), "The temporary store: a new marketing tool for fashion brands", *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 257-270.

Triki, A. and Hakimi, M. (2017), "The concept store as new retailing tool: from the experience to the revisit intention", *Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 110-116.

Van Doorn, J., Lemon, K., Mittal, V., Nass, S., Doreen, P. and Pirner, P. (2010), "Customer engagement behavior: theoretical foundations and research directions", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 253-66.

Van Rompay, T., Tanja-Dijkstra, K., Verhoeven, J. and van Es, A. (2011), "On store design and consumer motivation", *Environment and Behavior*, Vol. 44 No. 6, pp. 800-820.

van Rompay, T.J.L., Tanja-Dijkstra, K., Verhoeven, J.W.M. and van Es, A.F. (2012), "On store design and consumer motivation: spatial control and arousal in the retail context", *Environment and Behavior*, SAGE Publications, Los Angeles, CA, Vol. 44 No. 6, pp. 800-820, doi: 10.1177/0013916511407309.

Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R. (2008), "Service dominant logic: continuing the revolution", *Journal of the Academic of Marketing Science*, Vol. 36, pp. 1-10.

Verhoef, P., Parasuraman, A., Roggeveen, A., Tsiros, M. and Schlesinger, L. (2009), "Customer experience creation: determinants, dynamics and management strategies", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 85 No. 1, pp. 31-41, doi: 10.1016/J.JRETAI.2008.11.001.

Verhoef, P.C., Kannan, P.K. and Inman, J.J. (2015), "From multi-channel retailing to omni-channel retailing", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 91 No. 2, pp. 174-181.

Warnaby, G., Kharakhorkina, V., Shi, C. and Corniani, M. (2015), "Pop-up retailing: integrating objectives and activity stereotypes pop-up retailing: integrating objectives and activity stereotypes", *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, Vol. 6 No. 4, pp. 303-316, doi: 10.1080/20932685.2015.1070680.

Yin, R.K. (1994), *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4th ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Zeithaml, V.A., Berry, L.L. and Parasuraman, A. (1996), "The behavioral consequences of service quality", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 60 No. 2, pp. 31-46.

Zomerdijk, L.G. and Voss, C.A. (2010), "Service design for experience-centric services", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 67-82.

Corresponding author
Carys Jane Egan-Wyer can be contacted at: carys.egan-wyer@fek.lu.se