

Predicting Brand Loyalty to Manufacturer-Sponsored Brands in an Omnichannel Environment : A Configurational Perspective

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Abstract

Purpose : Drawing upon the configuration perspective, this study examined how combinations of different omnichannel capability dimensions from the supply side lead to brand loyalty for manufacturer-sponsored brands. Omnichannel integration is a long-drawn process that integrates a variety of dimensions. This induced us to understand how various combinations of dimensions lead to loyalty.

Design : The study used a multi-level design based on the data collected on 43 manufacturer-sponsor brands from experts and 2,320 consumers through a structured questionnaire. Using the Fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) method, the study explored the different pathways through which seven omnichannel dimensions, namely siloed retail mix, integrated marketing communication, integrated consumer order fulfillment, and information access, continuity of foundationals, rear-end system consolidation, and organization transfiguration, lead to demand-side brand loyalty.

Findings : The results showed that these seven omnichannel dimensions are sufficient conditions for achieving brand loyalty. The truth table analysis showed seven pathways for omnichannel integration efforts to improve brand loyalty.

Practical Implications : The study presented seven combinations of internal resource-based omnichannel capability dimensions for practical application, which may be implemented to attain loyalty objectives.

Originality : This is among the first studies to consider a comprehensive combination of omnichannel integration dimensions and their effects on brand loyalty, unlike previous studies that focused on such limited dimensions. This is also the first study to consider omnichannel integration of manufacturer brands, while previous studies have focused on multi-brand retailers. Further, through a configurational perspective, the study allays the methodological limitations of the variance-based approaches in the previous studies.

Keywords : omnichannel, cross-channel integration, multichannel, manufacturer-sponsored brands, brand loyalty, configuration perspective, fsQCA

Paper Submission Date : June 5, 2024 ; **Paper sent back for Revision :** October 9, 2024 ; **Paper Acceptance Date :** October 14, 2024 ; **Paper Published Online :** January 15, 2025

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.17010/ijom/2025/v55/i1/174685>

Driven by a 'feedback loop,' the relationship between technological development and adoption based on Straub's (2009) adoption decision theory, customers use portable computers, mobile devices, online networking sites, interactive information booths, and in-stores to make purchase decisions (Sorescu et al., 2011). According to the *Harvard Business Review* (Orendorff, 2018), omnichannel consumers appreciate using retailer touchpoints in as many permutations and locations as possible before purchasing (Orendorff, 2018). This provides retailers with an opportunity to augment and integrate their channel capabilities, transforming their channel strategies from mono- to multi-channel (MC), siloed to fully-integrated omnichannel (OMC) through various degrees (phases) of cross-channel integration (Mirsch et al., 2016).

Omnichannel integration is a long-drawn process and proceeds through different stages. An essential requirement for omni-channel retail is the smooth integration of various dimensions between channels (Huré et al., 2017). Consequently, attaining omnichannel synergy is essential for the success of the omnichannel retail strategy (Wang & Zhang, 2018). Extant literature has assessed 'channel integration-ness' based on a multitude of dimensions like products, price, sale promotional, service and distribution collaboration (Chen et al., 2022), channel-service configuration, content and process-consistency, and quality-assurance (Hossain et al., 2020). Prior literature suggested that omnichannel integration initiatives individually and jointly shape customer attitudes and behavior (Van Nguyen et al., 2024). Moreover, Pookulangara et al. (2011) asserted that enhancing consumer loyalty by offering a collaborative purchasing experience across several channels should be a pursued research avenue. However, limited research has been undertaken to examine the contentious relationship between omnichannel collaboration dimensions and their impact on customer loyalty (Chang & Li, 2020; Verhoef et al., 2015).

The initial study has examined the implications of omnichannel integration characteristics on consumer behavior, including customer retention (Mishra et al., 2022) and loyalty (Chen et al., 2022). However, these variance-based studies considered various combinations of omnichannel dimensions to understand consumer behavior, with none establishing the impact of the individual dimensions on loyalty. To summarize, the influence of individual omnichannel integration dimensions on customer brand loyalty has not been clarified. Second, many studies have examined the influence of the cumulative omnichannel capacity dimension on customer responses (Adapa et al., 2020), but few have examined its individual impact on loyalty. This is a significant limitation since omnichannel dimensions interact and affect customer response. The lack of a complete model to analyze omnichannel consumer reactions like brand loyalty (BL) restricts knowledge of how a brand's omnichannel strategies affect customer responses. Third, rising anecdotal data indicates that single-brand retailers, albeit manufacturer-sponsored companies, are consolidating their retail chains to attain omnichannel status. Case studies such as Nike (forbes.com, 2023), Unilever (consumergoods.com, 2022), and Hershey's illustrate the substantial endeavors undertaken by brands to adopt an omnichannel approach with their many channel partners. Investigating the influence of these strategies on customer perceptions and behaviors toward the brand is essential. Fourth, most studies analyze omnichannel integrations from customers' or employees' viewpoints and of one retailer or retailer brand, which limits their methodology. Employees' perspectives cannot accurately portray a brand's omnichannel integration, affecting outcome validity. We solve this methodological problem by studying omnichannel integration from subject experts' perspectives and considering many brands.

Finally, we use a configurational technique with fsQCA to determine which omnichannel capability dimensions contribute to brand loyalty, overcoming the limitations of the variance-based model. While previous studies have examined the influence of OMC capability dimensions on brand loyalty, few have examined how these dimensions interact and what dimensions must coexist to foster customer loyalty to a brand.

We address the gap by applying necessary condition analysis (NCA) and fsQCA. By focusing on single-brand retailers and alias manufacturer-sponsor brands, this paper constructs a research framework from the perspective of the resource base view and the literature on marketing channels. It also analyzes the combined effect of multiple

omnichannel dimensions on loyalty. Consequently, this study addresses the following questions: Which combined omnichannel integration dimensions influence loyalty? Then, we investigate the intricate causal linkages between configurational omnichannel dimensions and loyalty. Our findings shall help practitioners understand the significance of leveraging combinations of multiple omnichannel capability dimensions to achieve loyalty, especially for manufacturer-sponsor organizations.

Literature Review and Theoretical Background

Omnichannel (Cross-Channel Integration Services) and Comprehensive Dimensions

Verhoef et al. (2015) defined omnichannel as the synergetic management of numerous channels and customer touchpoints to maximize customer experience. Previous literature provided several definitions for omnichannel (Akter et al., 2021) and related terminologies such as multichannel retailing (Lewis et al., 2014), multichannel integration (Bendoly et al., 2005), and cross-channel integration (Cao & Li, 2015). These definitions share the ability to recommend ways to enhance organizational capabilities to enhance performance and attain a seamless customer experience. Some suggested OMC capability dimension enhancements are integrated pricing, products, selling, services, and distribution (Chen et al., 2022), channel service configuration, information and process consistency, and quality assurance (Hossain et al., 2020). We map several extant research against Cao and Li's (2015) most comprehensive capability dimensions of OMC, which suggests the prevalence of the relationship between these capability dimensions and consumer behavior. Channel integration-ness assessment was historically limited to specific capability dimensions (Oh et al., 2012). The advent of the Cao and Li (2015) model filled the gap. The current study extends this model to fill the gap and examine the combined effects of such omnichannel dimensions on loyalty.

Omnichannel with Loyalty

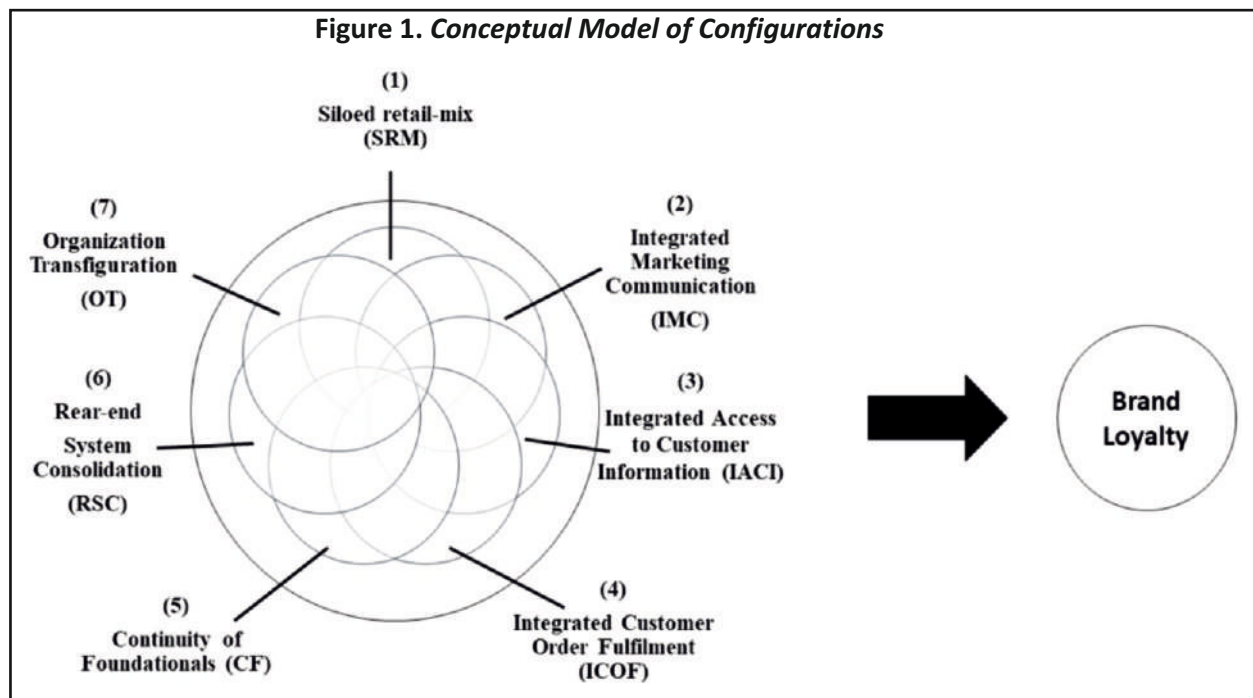
Brand loyalty is characterized by a solid and unwavering commitment to continually repurchase or support a chosen product or service in the future, resulting in repeated purchases of the same brand (Oliver, 1999). Oliver (1999) described four phases of loyalty towards a brand: developing a good attitude, forming a love, having behavioral intentions, and translating these intentions into tangible actions. As acquiring new customers becomes increasingly challenging due to increasing competitive pressure (Sharrow, 2019), previous studies such as Liu-Thompkins et al. (2022) suggested that retailers should enhance effectiveness to convert existing customers into more loyal ones. An omnichannel strategy can significantly boost customer loyalty by providing a more comprehensive range of options for consumers to assess and evaluate the services offered by retail organizations (Li et al., 2017). This allows consumers to choose their preferred channels, reducing perceived uncertainty and increasing retailer attractiveness (Li et al., 2018) and retention (Bendoly et al., 2005). By studying omnichannel from the customers' perspective, it is possible to operationalize brand loyalty based on how a consumer continues to purchase the brand, incorporating both brand loyalty elements of attitudinal and behavioral (Leckie et al., 2018). Hence, it is vital to examine omnichannel capability dimensions that are antecedents to loyalty (Pookulangara et al., 2011).

Previous literature has explored the omnichannel capability dimensions as an antecedent to consumer behavior from different perspectives, both indirectly and implicitly. For example, Lee (2020) found that integrated promotion and information access indirectly impact the intention to revisit omnichannel through satisfaction. By deploying the accessibility-diagnostics theory, Swoboda and Fränzel (2022) established an association of information, services, and promotion integration with purchase and integration of transaction, product

information, order fulfillment, and service integration with purchase decisions. Kim et al. (2017) studied the impact of the omnichannel dimension of buy-online and pickup in-store on the intention to adopt and use it by deploying the diffusion-of-innovation theory. Having deployed dynamic capabilities theory, Hossain et al. (2020) showed that all the sub-dimensions of channel-service configuration and content consistency indirectly impact cross-buying intentions through omnichannel integration quality. Rajan et al. (2017) found that Indian consumers have a positive purchase intent if the omnichannel capability component includes uniform product codes across channels, real-time order tracking, and local-based promotion. Sharma et al. (2024) found an association between social networking sites with consumer purchase intention through electronic word-of-mouth. Saribut (2022) emphasized that online and offline data integration capabilities influenced customer attitudes towards the use of O2O (online-to-offline) e-commerce. Kurup and Jain (2018) showed that cues such as product offerings and web-store environment had a significant impact on e-loyalty and eventually resulted in repurchase behavior.

In summary, researchers have examined a variety of omnichannel capability-based dimensions that impact consumer behavior, including consistent brand promotions and advertisements, product, price, inventory information, promotion integration, collect, return, repair, or exchange integration (Goraya et al., 2022), mobile identity, integration quality, transparency of channel service, breadth of channel choices, content, and process consistency (Sun et al., 2020). However, the four gaps mentioned above remain: (a) a direct relationship between these capability dimensions and loyalty has not been established; (b) multiple unsegregated capability dimensions have been simultaneously studied through variance-based research, but individual impact of these dimensions on loyalty has been missing ; (c) little attempt has been made to the combined effects of multiple individual factors due to the limitation in research methods ; and (d) there exist inconsistent findings on the roles of omnichannel capability dimensions due to the adoption of different theoretical perspectives.

To fill these gaps, we developed a framework (Figure 1) comprising seven dimensions from the resource-based theory perspective and the literature on marketing channels. These dimensions are explained below, along with their nearest and indirect relationships with loyalty and related consumer behavior constructs in the extant literature:



✎ The Siloed retail mix (SRM) dimension involves multichannel retailers with distinct pricing, brand name, assortment, and service policies across multiple channels. Falk et al. (2007) found that cross-channel dis-synergies across service channels impact loyalty, and Levin et al. (2005) suggested that product features differentially affect online and offline preference and loyalty. This recommends that SRM is linked to loyalty despite the non-alignment of the retail mix.

✎ Retailers utilize integrated marketing communication (IMC) to improve their channels by concentrating on consumer marketing communication activities. This approach ensures consistency in brand name and marketing message across channels. Through information integration, prior studies supported the relationship of IMC with behavior like OMC revisit intention (Lee, 2020) and retention (Mishra et al., 2022).

✎ Integrated customer order fulfillment (ICOF) involves integrating order fulfillment across various channels, including services and returns at physical retail stores and purchases online. Through order fulfillment capabilities, prior studies supported the relationship of ICOF with retention (Mishra et al., 2022). Kim et al. (2020) suggested a relationship between ICOF and behavioral intention and use through the deployment of buy-online-pick-up-in-store service.

✎ Integrated access to customer information (IACI) is a comprehensive approach to customer information, encompassing services like online inventory, in-store order fulfillment, in-store inventory browsing, and store-mobile app linkage. Through online information retrieval capability deployment, prior studies supported the relationship between IACI and behavior like buying intention (Hossain et al., 2020).

✎ Continuity of foundationals (CF) refers to aligning services, promotion, price, loyalty program, and assortment across channels. Through content and process consistency, previous literature like Chai and Wang (2022) established a relationship between CF with buying intention and sustained usage intention, respectively. Zhang et al. (2018) suggested the relationship between CF and purchase intention through integrated promotion, product, and price.

✎ Rear-end system consolidation (RSC) refers to integrating merchandise planning systems, logistics, information systems, centralized call center services, and a database of clients across channels. Through content and process consistency, previous literature like Chai and Wang (2022) established a relationship between RSC with sustained usage intention.

✎ Organization transfiguration (OT) involves the dissemination of knowledge across various channels, the recruitment of individuals with expertise in both retail and digital commerce, the adjustment of organizational structure to accommodate the integration of different channels, and the implementation of an incentive system that is connected to both online and offline sales. Previous studies have not examined its relationship with loyalty. However, studies like Hajdas et al. (2022) and Picot-Coupey et al. (2016) have included OT dimensions while studying retailers' omnichannel transformational journey challenges and strategies to overcome them.

The presence of multichannel is the first dimension propounded by Cao and Li (2015), and it is not treated separately in this study. It is the qualifying and essential criteria, not the other dimensions, which can be treated independently of the above-proposed dimensions.

Configurational Approach

In conjunction with complexity theory, the configurational approach provides a more comprehensive viewpoint of data, making it increasingly popular in marketing (Pappas et al., 2016). fsQCA can evaluate causal asymmetry,

equifinality, multifinality, and conjunctural causation in complex variable configurations (Ragin, 2009). Equifinality is the idea that many pathways can result in the same outcome. This analytical technique uses an exploratory comparative case study to illustrate intricate component patterns and their interactions in decision-making, resulting in brand loyalty. Prior research has highlighted that conventional approaches cannot solve configurational difficulties (Fiss, 2011). The configurational approach using fsQCA is suitable for studying omnichannel integration since many theories in this field are configurational, as demonstrated by extant studies (Van Nguyen et al., 2024).

However, the configurational approach is seldom employed in retailing and has been shown to help academics comprehend multichannel buying behavior. It has been used to study within-channel switching, cross-channel free-riding, and consumer multichannel buying antecedents (Chou et al., 2016), web rooming behavior (Santos & Gonçalves, 2019), purchase intention (Zhang & Huang, 2024). Deng et al. (2022) examined how organizational, channel, and environmental elements affected cross-channel integration.

Methodology

We employed NCA to evaluate whether all seven identified omnichannel integration dimensions are necessary or unnecessary conditions for loyalty. While NCA can quantitatively indicate the extent of necessity (including specific scores), combining NCA with fsQCA is significantly more advantageous (Vis & Dul, 2018). Consequently, following the NCA analysis, we employed fsQCA to evaluate the robustness of the NCA findings. Ultimately, we examined the configuration of the variables.

Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA)

The study examines brand loyalty and omnichannel dimension conditions using fsQCA. The technique is asymmetric, so a particular degree of result is connected with a set of causative circumstances, but the opposite condition does not necessarily signal the lack of the outcome (Fainshmidt et al., 2020; Fiss, 2007). Identifying combinations of causative conditions related to the outcome may help explore complex, interrelated causal linkages (Fainshmidt et al., 2020; Fiss, 2007). QCA views cases as configurations of circumstances and uses truth tables to analyze those (Ragin & Fiss, 2008). This approach implies that set memberships are ideal for interpreting complex causal relationships (Fiss, 2007). Unlike standard regression-based techniques, it distinguishes between necessary and sufficient components for a result (Ragin, 2009) and may be used on 12 or more samples.

Sample and Procedure

Data for our study was collected through separate surveys conducted at different times, involving diverse participants: one, from industry experts for measuring omnichannel integration dimensions of manufacturer-sponsor brands, and second, from their consumers. Data collection happened through personal interaction at various institutions, wherein product and brand were shown either through overhead projectors or by explaining the statement and photo provided in the questionnaire. Expert data was collected before the consumer data.

Data Collection from Experts

Indian sales/marketing and distribution specialists with over 15 years of experience participated in this study. The Top500 Fortune India list and online suggestions determined the selection of the consumer brands in industries such as consumer electronics, electrical, mobile, hair-skin care, packaged foods, apparel-fashion, home

appliances, and air conditioners. Each expert evaluated up to five brands on the focal dimensions, and every brand was evaluated by three experts using a 3×5 matrix. Convenience and snowball sampling techniques were adopted to recruit experts per the predefined qualification. However, care was taken to recruit experts uniformly across various brands within and between the industries. Experts were contacted offline and online via social networking portals like LinkedIn and the authors' professional network. June–September 2022 was the data collection period. At first, 121 experts were approached to evaluate 106 selected brands in 11 categories. In all, 56 specialists agreed and evaluated 86 brands during personal interaction. However, only 43 brands were investigated since customer responses exceeded the criterion.

Data Collection from Consumers

Convenience sampling was used to survey 2,744 consumers across India for 56 brands and 11 categories recommended by experts. Participants were recruited from various sources and geographic locations in India, including an online consumer survey through a certified market research firm and author's network, including various organization employees, school/college staff, personal networks, and social media connections. The panel includes the general public, teachers, academics, administration staff, and post-grad students. The sampling frame was limited to internet users, as they represent potential online channel buyers and are more likely to be impacted by OMC. Consumers without internet access were excluded from the sampling process. The sample, comprising 43 brand groups, had 2,320 responses. The data was collected through personal visits across PAN India between June 2022 and December 2022.

Measurement

The study used seven manufacturer-sponsor brand omnichannel dimension measures and one consumer measure to access constructs using a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting “*strongly disagree*” and 7 denoting “*strongly agree*.”

Omnichannel Dimension Measurements

The 26-item scale, as recommended by Cao and Li (2015), was used to evaluate a brand's omnichannel capability dimensions. The scale was transformed into a survey questionnaire (see Appendix A) for industry experts, with customized questionnaires for individual brands. The best expert score for each item was considered for further analysis. This also comprises Cronbach's alpha value, above 0.6 in three and above 0.75 in four dimensions.

Customers' Construct Measurement

The study assessed the latest constructs using reflective indicators, adapting to the established scales. Following Oliver's (1999) and Leckie et al.'s (2018) recommendations, we adopted the following five-point rating to measure BL: This brand is my first choice, one that I like, prefer, and intend to keep buying. I will also suggest it to others. Cronbach's alpha value obtained is 0.90.

Calibration

Calibration is a crucial process in fsQCA, where collective membership is assigned to cases with a calibrated membership between 1 and 0 (Ragin, 2008). Direct and indirect methods are frequently used for calibration (Pappas & Woodside, 2021). Indirect calibration necessitates rescaling the measurement range, whereas direct

Table 1. Calibration of Variables

Type	Name	Description	Original Scale	Source	Data Processing	Calibration Rule		
						Full Membership	Crossover Point	No Membership
Outcome	<i>BL</i>	Brand Loyalty	Oliver (1999), Leckie et al. (2018)	Consumer Survey	Average of the measured item considered for calibration of construct	7.00	5.36	1.00
Condition	<i>SRM</i>	Siloed Retail-Mix	Cao & Li (2015)	Expert Survey		5.95	4.24	2.56
Condition	<i>IMC</i>	Integrated Marketing Communication				6.91	5.80	3.75
Condition	<i>ICOF</i>	Integrated Consumer Order Fulfillment				5.22	3.46	1.77
Condition	<i>IACI</i>	Integrated Access to Customer Information				6.00	3.35	1.16
Condition	<i>CF</i>	Continuity of Foundational				6.25	5.48	3.68
Condition	<i>RSC</i>	Rear-End System Consolidation				6.40	5.49	3.62
Condition	<i>OT</i>	Organization Transfiguration				6.58	5.22	3.31

calibration necessitates defining membership levels in the fuzzy set using three qualitative breakpoints. For direct calibration, studies usually employ three thresholds: 0.95, 0.5, and 0.05 (Ragin, 2008). Based on previous research, this study employs all non-membership points as the minimum value, intersection points as the average, and the full membership points of seven antecedents and one result variable as the maximum value (Fiss, 2011; Romero-Castro et al., 2022). Please refer to Table 1 for the anchor point calibration.

Findings and Discussion

Necessary Conditions

The presence of necessary conditions for the outcome was checked before conducting the fuzzy truth table technique (Ragin, 2009). Ragin (2009) defines a necessary condition as one that “must be present for the outcome to occur, but does not guarantee its occurrence.” Amara et al. (2020) stated that the necessity analysis's consistency threshold is set at 0.9. Analysis showed that none of the omnichannel dimensions were a necessary condition for brand loyalty, as all consistency values were below 0.9. Hence, all seven conditions were included in the next stage of analysis, which calculated the truth table utilizing sufficient condition analysis.

Sufficient Conditions

The truth table, which enumerates every conceivable combination of the seven causal requirements, is reviewed to

determine sufficient conditions (Ragin, 2008). There are 64 configurations in the original truth table (2^k ; k is the number of causative circumstances). Relevant configurations that result in the desired outcome are identified by calculating the minimum number of cases and the acceptable consistency level of a configuration (Fiss, 2011). As “logical remainders,” certain rows contain zero cases (Ragin, 2009; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Small sample studies often allow settings for the sufficiency analysis to include one case.

The truth table should have consistency ratings as near to '1.0' as possible, indicating complete consistency (Ragin, 2008). However, this seldom happens. To determine the consistency score, Ragin and Fiss (2008) proposed arranging the scores in descending order and identifying potential gaps in the higher range of consistency. The minimum acceptable consistency score is 0.75. When the observed consistency falls below 0.75, it becomes challenging to maintain the presence of a defined relationship (Ragin, 2008). We repeated the trial using a 0.92 consistency threshold to determine resilience. The results are resilient and reliable since there were no significant differences (Skaaning, 2011).

The fsQCA software offers parsimonious, moderate, and complex sufficiency analysis solutions. Solution types differ in how much they analyze logical residuals. According to Ragin (2009) and management research (Cheng et al., 2013), we propose and examine the intermediate solution. The Intermediate solution is superior to the complex and parsimonious solution because it does not permit the removal of necessary conditions. These necessary conditions include any logical and essential conditions that are a superset of the outcome (Ragin, 2009). Table 2 displays the results.

The truth table analysis produced seven valid omnichannel brand loyalty combinations. To present the findings, we employ Ragin and Fiss's (2008) notion, where black circles indicate presence and crossed-out circles indicate absence of conditions. The condition is inconsequential in empty spaces. Coverage and consistency metrics for each setup and solution are produced. These two measurements ascertain the meaningfulness of configurations. Consistency is how well cases with the same conditions reach a particular conclusion (Ragin, 2008). The solution and individual consistencies surpass the required 0.75 consistency score. Scores range from 0.76 to 0.9587. Therefore, all identified combinations are sufficient for achieving the desired result.

Solution coverage is 0.7635. According to Schneider and Wagemann (2012), seven combinations of omnichannel dimensions influence brand loyalty. Coverage ranges from 0.2687 to 0.4970. This represents the extent to which path membership accounts for outcome membership. There is no minimum coverage criterion,

Table 2. Results from the Truth Table Analysis

Condition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SRM	•	∅	∅	•	∅	∅	∅
IMC	∅	•	∅			•	∅
ICOF	∅	∅	∅	•	•	•	∅
ICIA	∅	∅	•	∅	•	•	∅
AF	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	•	∅
RSC	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	•	•
OT	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	•	•
Raw Coverage	0.4970	0.3182	0.4153	0.3544	0.3519	0.2687	0.3046
Unique Coverage	0.0484	0.0175	0.0225	0.0083	0.0072	0.0223	0.0070
Consistency	0.9351	0.9468	0.9249	0.9500	0.9393	0.9381	0.9587
Solution Coverage	0.7635						
Solution Consistency	0.8785						

unlike consistency. Thus, paths with inadequate coverage might still be relevant. Unique coverage measures how much a single path covers exclusively. All unique coverages are greater than zero. Therefore, the solution has no conceptually redundant pathways, according to Schneider and Wagemann (2012). Böhm et al. (2017) also noted that all unique coverages explain the result.

Configurations

The analysis yields seven configurations. *Configuration 1* shows that different retail-mix policies of retailers or brands increase brand loyalty even without consumer order fulfillment integration, information access integration, integrated marketing communication, continuity of foundationals, rear-end system consolidation, and organization transfiguration. Similarly, *Configuration 2* confirms that integrated marketing communication increases brand loyalty even without other focal dimensions, and *Configuration 3* verifies this with the OMC dimension of consumer information access integration. With integrated marketing communication positioned as irrelevant, *Configuration 4* confirms siloed retail mix and integrated customer order fulfillment as sufficient conditions to achieve brand loyalty without other balance dimensions. Similarly, *Configuration 5* confirms that integrated customer order fulfillment and information access are sufficient conditions to achieve desired brand loyalty. With the absence of a siloed retail-mix dimension, all the other dimensions are considered sufficient conditions to achieve brand loyalty, as per *Configuration 6*. Finally, *Configuration 7* confirms rear-end system consolidation and organization transfiguration as a sufficient condition to achieve desired brand loyalty without remaining focal dimensions.

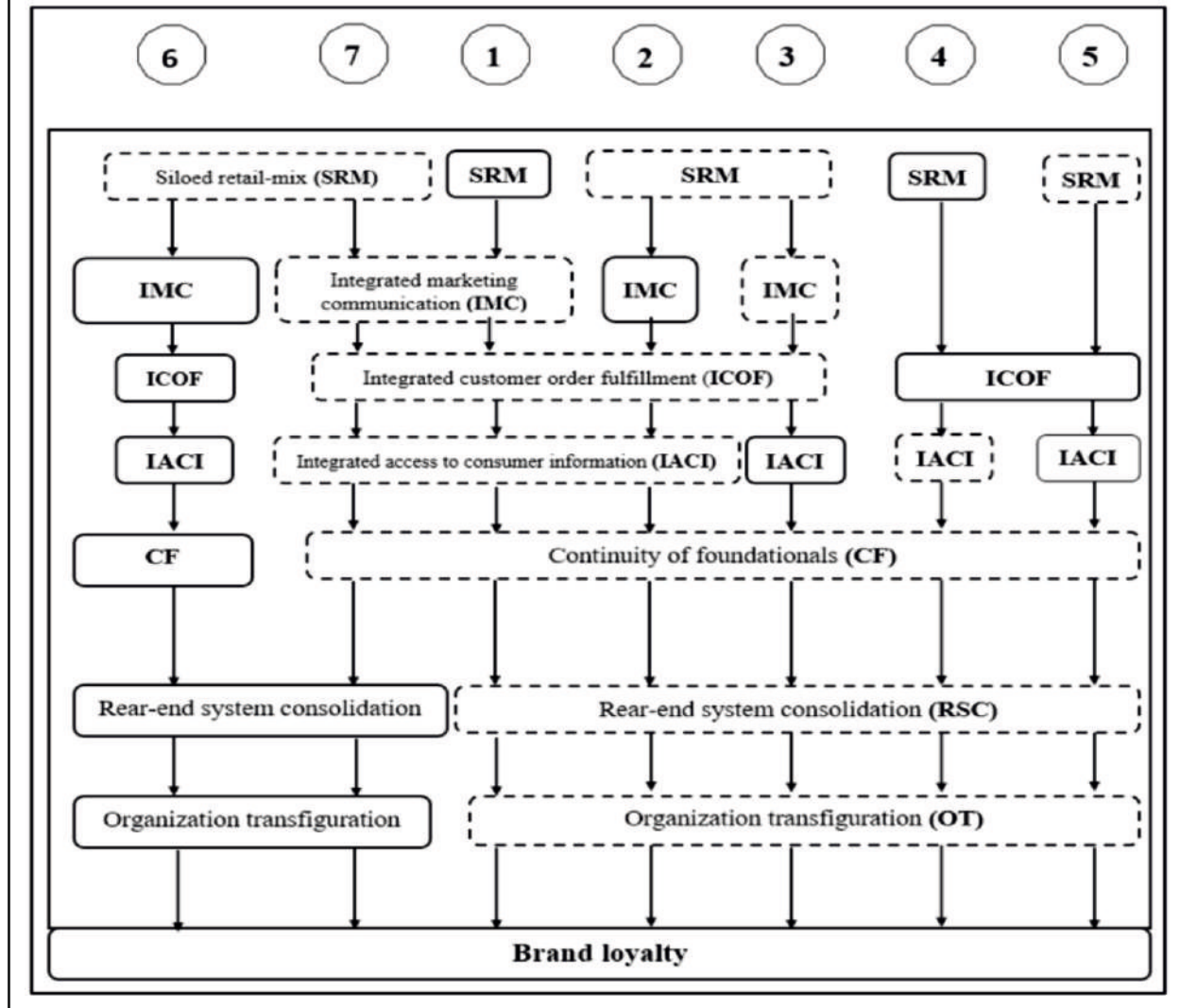
Causal Paths

To enhance the clarity and understanding of configurations, we depict the resulting configurations as causal paths, following the approach used by Cheng et al. (2013) (refer to Figure 2). This image enhances the identification of similarities and disparities in the configurations. Our investigation reveals the underlying principles that govern the arrangements.

The primary combinations to be emphasized are whether the multichannel brands adopt a separated, albeit siloed, or integrated strategy. Manufacturer-sponsor brands that adopt a distribution strategy of multichannel presence can achieve brand loyalty by adapting to the siloed retail mix or integrated channels. When the siloed retail mix is not adopted, manufacturer-sponsor brands can achieve brand loyalty through five pathways: (a) two, by implementing, (b) two, by not implementing, and (c) one, by ignoring integrated marketing communication. In the first scenario, when the IMC is implemented, then the brands achieve loyalty either through (a) implementing all the dimensions of omnichannel such as integrated consumer order fulfillment and access to information, continuity of foundationals, rear-end system consolidation, and organization transfiguration, or (b) by ignoring the implementation of all these omnichannel dimensions. In the second scenario where the integrated marketing communication dimension of omnichannel is not implemented, manufacturer-sponsor brands achieve brand loyalty either (a) by implementing rear-end system consolidation and organization transfiguration dimensions of omnichannel strategy and not implementing integrated consumer order fulfillment and information access and continuity of foundationals or (b) by implementing integrated access to consumer information, and not implementing the remaining four dimensions. In the third scenario, where an omnichannel strategy's integrated marketing communication dimension is ignored, brands achieve brand loyalty by providing consumers with access to information and integrated consumer order fulfillment, but not aligning foundational with an unconsolidated rear-end system and not implementing organizational transfiguration.

When the siloed retail-mix dimension is adopted, manufacturer-sponsor brands can achieve brand loyalty

Figure 2. Causal Paths – Sufficient Conditions Leading to Brand Loyalty



through two pathways: (a) by implementing and (b) by ignoring integrated marketing communication. In the first scenario, where integrated marketing communication is not implemented, brands achieve brand loyalty by not implementing all the other dimensions. In the second scenario, brands achieve loyalty by integrating customer order fulfillment and not implementing the remaining dimensions. This suggests that manufacturer-sponsor brands can achieve loyalty with either only the siloed retail-mix dimension or along with ICOF.

Implications

Theoretical Contribution

The study proposes a configurational framework from multiple theoretical perspectives examining the relationship between configurational dimensions of omnichannel integration and brand loyalty in the context of multi-channel, cross-channel, and omnichannel marketing. NCA and fsQCA were conducted to derive seven

configurations' conditions for achieving brand loyalty in manufacturer-sponsor brands in their evolutionary journey of omnichannel transformation. Our study indicates that brand loyalty is influenced by the combined effect of numerous cross-channel integration dimensions rather than being only linearly influenced by each component. This enhances the existing knowledge on multiple channel marketing, omnichannel marketing, and consumer behavior by offering valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms that drive the development of omnichannel strategies, ultimately resulting in increased brand loyalty. The study also provides insights into the siloed retail mix and suggests its influence on consumer loyalty behavior, supporting prior studies such as the one conducted by Kokku (2021).

Our research also addresses the existing gap in the literature. As an illustration, Cao and Li (2015) developed a multi-dimension scale to measure cross-channel integration by dividing various organizational capabilities into eight hierarchical categories and examining the relationship of cross-channel integration with sales and revenue. Cao and Li (2018) investigated the influence of company-level diversity on cross-channel integration. They discovered that the relationship between firm diversity and cross-channel integration is characterized by a non-linear pattern, namely an inverted U-shape. This study fills the gap by understanding the interrelation of these multi-dimensions of manufacturer-sponsor omnichannel brands and their non-linear relationship with loyalty. Previous studies have studied multiple dimensions of omnichannel integration, some internal and others external to firms. Internal dimensions of the firm include information technology (IT) capability, organizational strategy, and size and resources of an organization, and external dimensions include environmental factors (Cao & Li, 2018; Zhang et al., 2017). However, none of the prior studies have studied all the internal omnichannel dimensions of the firms, which leads to consumer loyalty behavior. We extend the omnichannel literature by suggesting that manufacturer-sponsor brands adjust internally controlled dimensions of channel structure to maximize brand loyalty.

Additionally, our research helps resolve observed differences in the literature. For example, Lee (2020) found that integrated promotion and information access indirectly impact the intention to revisit omnichannel through satisfaction. However, integration transactions, product and pricing information, order fulfillment, and customer service do not impact the intention. This implies that though IMC and IACI do, ICOF does not impact revisit intentions. The results of our analysis confirm the prevalence of the relationship between IACE and ICOF and loyalty (configuration 5). Similarly, IMC has a significant impact on loyalty (configuration 2).

Managerial Implications

Our findings emphasize the need to utilize combinations of various internal-resource-based capability dimensions that lead to loyalty for the manufacturer-sponsor brands that have implemented an omnichannel strategy. Though marked by specific implementation-related challenges such as data access, consumer privacy protection, and marketing attrition (Cui et al., 2021), there is always a solution to mitigate them, for example, retaining different types of customers (Yin et al., 2022). Omnichannel encompasses several advantages such as benefits (Goersch, 2002), seamless omnichannel retail experience (Bell et al., 2014), retail patronage (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006), trust (Pagani et al., 2019), omnichannel integration quality (Hossain et al., 2020), intention to use, search, and purchase (Kim, 2021).

Therefore, the practical ramifications of our configurational investigation and findings are how firms mix different factors to create cross-channel integration configurations to achieve brand loyalty. Our study findings specifically indicate the presence of seven configurations, differentiated by either integration or siloed multichannel strategy of manufacturer-sponsor brands. Brand loyalty is obtained by integrating only marketing communication that supports the findings of Mishra et al. (2022) and more. A similar result was obtained through the integration of both customer order fulfillment and information access, which supports the finding of prior

studies like Kuruzovich et al. (2008) that suggested the existence of its relationship with referred purchase through deployment of online information retrieval capability and Kim et al. (2017), who suggested its relationship with intention to adopt and use through deployment of buy-online and pickup in-store. Brand loyalty is attained by the integration of all the six focal dimensions of marketing communication: consumer information access, order fulfillment, continuity of foundationals, rear-end system consolidation, and organization transfiguration across various channels. This supports studies like Swoboda and Fränzel (2022) and Goraya et al. (2022).

On the siloed retail-mix dimension, loyalty can be achieved by implementing it either without implementing any integration dimensions or with only customer order fulfillment integration. This implies that loyalty can be attained without channel integration, which is explained by the categories of industry or products studied in India. Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), consumer durables, and apparel goods researched were in their different integration phases in India, with FMCG moving faster than CD. In the CD product category, as most brands are still transforming, loyalty could be possible just by staying available in multiple channels. Exposure to diverse resources-based capabilities in an omnichannel setting causes different loyalty behaviors among consumers of different industries. Goraya et al. (2022) used integration marketing communication capabilities to study the effects of cross-channel integration. They found that free-riding (showrooming and webrooming) and patronage intentions differ between search products like consumer durable (CD) and experience products like clothing.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

Based on the resource-based capability of manufacturer-sponsor brands, we found certain elements that contribute to brand loyalty in omnichannel configuration. However, multiple theoretical perspectives exist on the omnichannel dimensions that we did not include. For example, organization size, information technology capability, environmental dynamism, financial resources, cross-channel migration, and product factors might influence cross-channel integration. Subsequent research endeavors can delve deeper into these characteristics by employing fsQCA, particularly in conjunction with the ones we have already found. Further, these studies may explore demand-side constructs of customer perceived value, brand preference, choice, etc., and understand the influence of the omnichannel dimensions on these constructs. As discussed, the product category moderates the influence on loyalty. Hence, future studies should study various categories like CD, FMCG, and apparel to provide further insights.

Authors' Contribution

Dinesh Sharma and Prof. Sunil Sahadev conceptualized the research topic idea. Dinesh Sharma did the literature survey and identified dimensions and sub-dimensions. Dinesh Sharma, Dr. Tapan Kumar Panda, and Prof. Dr. Sunil Sahadev selected and finalized the methodology. Dinesh Sharma prepared the measurement instruments, collected data, cleaned data, arranged software, and conducted the formal analysis. Dinesh Sharma wrote the original draft, and Dinesh Sharma, Dr. Tapan Kumar Panda, and Prof. Dr. Sunil Sahadev reviewed and edited the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Funding Acknowledgment

The authors received no financial support for this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this investigation and supplementary material are accessible from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Appendix A. Omnichannel Capability Dimension Scale

Item No.	Omnichannel Dimension	Abbreviations	Cronbach's Alpha	Items	Sources
CCIQ1	Siloed retail-mix	SRM	0.62	Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion have different assortment policies in different channels?	Cao and Li (2015)
CCIQ2				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion have different brand names in different channels?	
CCIQ3				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion have different price policies in different channels?	
CCIQ4				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion provide different services through different channels?	
CCIQ5	Integrated marketing communication	IMC	0.60	Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion align marketing message across channels?	
CCIQ6				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion have integrated marketing communication across channels?	
CCIQ7	Integrated access to customer information	IACI	0.60	Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion provide access to online inventory, and does staff in-store fulfill online orders?	
CCIQ12				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion allow mobile app and store linkage?	
CCIQ8				Does 'Raymond's' Apparel & Fashion allow online consumers to browse in-store inventory?	
CCIQ9	Integrated consumer order fulfillment	ICOF	0.75	Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion allow buying online and returning in-store?	
CCIQ10				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion allow click and pick-up in-store?	
CCIQ11				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion allow click-to-call?	
CCIQ14	Continuity of foundationals	CF	0.98	Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion align loyalty programs across channels?	
CCIQ15				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion align prices across channels?	
CCIQ16				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion align sales promotion across channels?	
CCIQ17				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion align services across channels?	
CCIQ13	Rear-end system consolidation	RSC	0.96	Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion align assortment across channels?	
CCIQ18				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion have a centralized call center service across channels?	
CCIQ21				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion integrate a database of clients across channels?	
CCIQ22				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion integrate information systems across channels?	
CCIQ23				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion integrate logistics across channels?	

CCIQ24				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion integrate a merchandise planning system across channels?
CCIQ19	Organization transfiguration	OT	0.96	Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion support and encourage a changing organizational structure to adapt to the integration of different channels?
CCIQ20				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion link the incentive system to online and offline sales?
CCIQ25				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion recruit talents with double retail and digital commerce competencies?
CCIQ26				Does 'Raymond' Apparel & Fashion share knowledge across channels?

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