

IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES AND INDUSTRY DRIVERS ON THE LEVEL OF MARKETING CHANNELS INTEGRATION

The transformation we have been witnessing in the retail industry may be attributed to several drivers, caused by technology development and changes in consumers' behaviors (Duarte et al., 2018). Channel integration has already been discussed in several studies (i.e. Jaworski, Kohli, 1996), which led to development of research on channel evolution, mainly because marketing channels are among the most important elements of any value chain (Krafft et al., 2015). Further, as observed by Lazaris and Vrechopoulos (2014), we may now be witnessing a shift from a multi-channel approach to an omni-channel approach, as a result of the more advanced integration of information and service systems and the improved coordination of the respective fragmented processes. This shift is demonstrated by the increasing number of customers demanding a seamless 'user journey': from 72% in 2011 to 83% in 2016 (E-tailing Group, 2016). This is confirmed by research results indicating that 76% of managers consider an omni-channel approach a key business priority (Melero et al., 2016), even though only 32% of them find themselves effective in the coordination of different channels (Econsultancy, 2015).

Both our exploratory studies: literature review and multiple case research, enabled us to propose a theoretical framework showing the scope of internal obstacles requiring organizational capabilities to be faced, as well as the industry drivers affecting the evolution of channel integration. We believe that both, internal and external obstacles and how companies deal with them through their organizational capabilities relate to the level of channel integration. We treat this assumption as a theoretical proposition and we present it as our research model. Our research model includes the following **variables**:

- moderator: organizational capabilities to overcome internal and external obstacles (OC),
- independent variable 1: internal obstacles (IO) which comprise of the categories identified through our literature studies and then confirmed by our multiple case research,
- independent variable 2: industry drivers (ID), which comprise of the categories identified through our multiple case research,
- dependent variable: the level of channel integration (ChanInt).
- control variables: will be precisely defined after FGI, the proposed variables are company's size and maturity, revenue dynamics

Our **research problem** at this stage of our project is connected with verifying relations between organizational capabilities to overcome internal and external obstacles, industry drivers and the level of channel integration. We want to verify and understand what is the nature and the strength of the relations between those variables. Therefore our **research goal** can be stated as follows: verifying theoretical model proposed, through explaining the relationship between organizational capabilities to overcome internal and external obstacles, industry drivers that result in occurrence of external obstacles, and the level of channel integration.

Our research includes both, qualitative methods (focus group interviews) and quantitative surveys (CATI). The group of respondents consists of representatives of 322 enterprises included in the list of 2000 largest companies operated in Poland according to the ranking "The list of 2000" of the "Rzeczpospolita" newspaper (this list was a population used in the survey). "The list of 2000" presents the largest enterprises in terms of generated revenues operated in Poland. The selection of such a main population was driven by the assumption that the largest enterprises in terms of generated revenues have the various resources to create an omni-channel.

Expected results of the project

The research project is based on a combination of the inductive approach (developing a theory on the basis of research data analysis) with the deductive approach (using research to test a theory). This fulfills the standards of the scientific inquiry practice, where theory and research are linked through iterative processes passing from induction to deduction and the other way around (Babbie 2013). The expected results of the project will therefore contain both: 1. **developing theory proposition** - based on the exploratory phase of the project; the theory proposition will respond to the identified theoretical gap regarding the lack of research highlighting the full scope of internal and external obstacles connected with the evolution of marketing channels integration; 2. **verifying the theory proposition** - based on the explanatory phase of the project; it will result in explaining the nature and the strength of the relations between organizational capabilities required for overcoming internal and external obstacles, industry drivers and the level of marketing channels integration. Such approach will allow to fill the theoretical gap on this field of research.