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The ‘store of the future’ in popular culture: Trends in press coverage of experiential retailing

ABSTRACT

1. Since the introduction of the iPhone in 2007, the global retail market has witnessed
2. massive demographic and technological changes that have re-defined consumer
3. experience. Such changes include the rise of the millennial consumer cohort, and
4. the introduction of retailers implementing enhanced artificial intelligence (AI)
5. data methodology to analyse business, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality
6. (VR) to enhance experience and co-customization interfaces. Two seminal pieces
7. of literature regarding consumer experience are Ballantine and Parson’s analy-
8. sis of consumer experience factors and Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) Experience
9. Economy. However, these studies were conducted nearly a decade ago, leaving
10. a void in the literature that does not consider more current factors impacting
11. consumer experience. The purpose of the present research was to: analyse popu-
12. lar press coverage to understand trends in experiential elements; and to extend
13. the Ballantine and Parsons’ framework by proposing more current experiential
14. elements. The researchers used the EBSCO database to generate a list of articles

KEYWORDS

retailing
experiential retailing
customer experience
retail trends
retail technology
customization

written from 2008 to 2018; these articles were then analysed via a qualitative content analysis method, using Ballantine and Parson's and Pine and Gilmore's frameworks as a base. Emergent themes that did not fit the above frameworks were added, thereby updating and extending the current body of knowledge. Findings indicated an increased emphasis on 'experiential retailing' over the years 2016–18. Product display, employees, colour and comfort features emerged as the most important Ballantine and Parsons themes, while new emergent themes of technology, uniqueness/personalization and entertainment/escapism/discovery were added to the Ballantine and Parsons framework, thus updating it to reflect current retailing trends. Implications for industry and academia, along with directions for future research are provided.

INTRODUCTION

As the global retail market approaches \$15 trillion annually and is anticipated to reach \$16 trillion by 2020 (GMID 2018), retailers are keen to remain competitive and establish an advantage in the marketplace (Armstrong and Kotler 2013). Recent years have illustrated retailers' need to keep current, manifested via retail bankruptcies on a global scale (NRF Stores 2018). Lewis and Dart call this a 'shift from producer to consumer' (2014: 4). In the new retail economy consumers may obtain products that they desire at the price that they demand in real-time from an infinite number of retail brands. This has brought about the need for retailers to strive to connect with consumers everywhere, and all the time, via omni-channel strategies (Lewis and Dart 2014; NRF Stores 2018).

Factors that have contributed to increasing challenges in the retail market include sweeping changes in demographics and technology (Dorie et al. 2015). More than 80 million millennials have become the dominant consumer group in the United States and are anticipated to spend more than \$1.4 trillion yearly by 2020 (Donnelly and Scaff 2013). This generation is not only becoming more important to retailers merely because of their size and spending power, but also since they have an affinity to beta test emerging technologies and tend to be early adopters (Shim et al. 2011). Simultaneously, the baby boom generation continues to possess a large percentage of wealth, and is entering second careers after retirement (Dorie et al. 2017). Both generational cohorts have been shown to have an orientation to seek out enjoyment and entertainment through shopping experiences (Moore and Carpenter 2008). These demographic phenomena are combined with advances in mobile, augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence (AI) (Kramer 2017), and radio frequency identification (RFID) technologies that have forced retailers to create seamless omni-channel connections for consumers across all touch points (Culp 2015).

Over the past 60 years, the retail landscape has been flooded with brands, to the extent that the United States has far outpaced other countries in terms of retail development and new brands. Currently, the United States houses nearly three times the amount of retail space as the second-place country (Lewis and Dart 2014). This oversaturation of the market has contributed to consumer fatigue and less satisfaction in consumers' shopping decisions (Schwartz 2009).

With the above in mind, retailers have been forced to re-think traditional strategies (Lewis and Dart 2014), where target consumers were predominantly identified through demographic means (Armstrong and Kotler 2013).

1. Although psychographic consumer segmentation is not a new thought,
 2. authors have noted the increasing importance on intangible psychographic
 3. elements of retail that involve experiences (Axelrad 2017). Writings about the
 4. evolution of retail have included Pine and Gilmore's (1999) *The Experience*
 5. *Economy* and Lewis and Dart's (2014) *The New Rules of Retail* amongst other
 6. works. In addition to practitioner-oriented works, scholarly contributions to
 7. the field of retail experience are numerous. These include investigations into
 8. hedonic and utilitarian consumer motivations (Arnold and Reynolds 2003;
 9. Babin et al. 1994), analyses of physical store attributes that contribute to shop-
 10. per experiences (Baker et al. 1994; Ballantine and Parsons 2010; Bitner 1992).
 11. In the new retail paradigm, focus has shifted away from tangible business
 12. factors, such as price, place, and product, and onto 'experience per square foot'
 13. (Axelrad 2017: 31).

14. The aforementioned studies have gathered data from both C-Suite
 15. executives and industry observations (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Lewis and
 16. Dart 2014), as well as traditional primary data collection methods such as
 17. consumer surveys (Arnold and Reynolds 2003; Babin et al. 1994; Baker et al.
 18. 1994; Ballantine and Parsons 2010; Bitner 1992), however, to these researchers
 19. knowledge, no study has attempted to quantify trends through content analy-
 20. sis of key words from popular press sources.

21. It is important for retailers to understand customers' opinions on experi-
 22. ence, and this is usually developed through primary research such as focus
 23. groups and surveys (Armstrong and Kotler 2013), as well as academic studies
 24. such as the above listed examples. However, it is equally important for retail-
 25. ers to understand macro industry trends and to gain insight from competi-
 26. tors and industry experts, such as analysis from press sources. Therefore, the
 27. purpose of this study is to: document shifts in press coverage trends with
 28. regards to specific elements of the shopping experience that contribute to
 29. meaningful consumer outcomes, utilizing Ballantine and Parsons' (2010) envi-
 30. ronmental factors framework; and to propose elements that might be added
 31. to Ballantine and Parsons' (2010) elements that are more reflective of today's
 32. retailing environment.

34. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

35. The retailing industry is of major importance to the global economy, repre-
 36. senting \$15 trillion in 2018 and is expected to grow to \$22 trillion by the year
 37. 2022 (GMID 2018). Many areas of the globe have become equal to, or have
 38. exceeded, the United States in terms of total sales. GMID (2018) notes that the
 39. Asia Pacific region of the world is now generating approximately \$1.5 trillion
 40. more than North America. Although popular thought is that online generates
 41. a major portion of retail sales, in fact the opposite is true, with bricks-and-
 42. mortar representing approximately 90% of global sales (NRF Stores 2018).
 43. Currently, the proportion of women's, men's, children's, and footwear apparel
 44. sold in bricks-and-mortar stores are 82%, 77%, 71% and 62%, respectively
 45. (Statista 2018). It is for this reason that research into the retailing industry –
 46. and what experiences drive consumers to purchase – is paramount.

48. RETAILING SHIFTS

49. In their work *The New Rules of Retail*, Lewis and Dart (2014) note that the
 50. retailing industry has undergone several major shifts over the course of the
 51. past 150 years. In the 1880s, catalogues delivered everything a family needed,
 52.

and the focus was on a push supply chain, where product was curated for the consumer. In fact, production could not keep up with consumer demand (Lewis and Dart 2014). Simultaneously department stores began to open, offering the consumer entertainment in addition to a shopping trip (Reilly 1966). In the 1960s, companies such as Ralph Lauren built upon the concept of stores as entertainment by offering consumers a cohesive branded lifestyle to emulate (Lewis and Dart 2014).

However, as the retailing industry has become increasingly crowded with stores and brands, differentiation, share-of-market, and profitability are more difficult to achieve. Power in the market has shifted from the myriad of retailers – to consumers who can choose from a seemingly infinite number of acceptable alternatives (Lewis and Dart 2014). As retailing moves in the twenty-first century, retailers need to think as customers do. Customers want to shop via any method or place. Therefore, retailers cannot function solely as pure-play store or online merchants (Paton 2017). For this reason, retailers have resorted to an omni-channel retailing approach that integrates all consumer-facing touch points (e.g., physical store, web, mobile and others), coordinating back-of house activities (e.g., buying, operations, logistics, etc.). This results in a seamless experience for the consumer, since there is simultaneous instant access to all areas of the retailer (Levy et al. 2014).

Due to these shifts, the retail industry has been challenged in recent years, with bankruptcy and store closings becoming frequent events (NRF Stores 2018); according to NRF's *Global Powers of Retailing* report, there were 6885 store closings in 2017 (2018: G4), which indicate 'transformative change'. The National Retail Federation (2018) states that the industry will be revolutionized by 'innovation, collaboration, consolidation, integration, and automation' (G4). In her Ted Talk, Rachel Schectman (2013) founder of 'groundbreaking' (Axelrad 2017: 31) retailer STORY, states that although retailers have been traditionally focused on key performance indicators (KPI's) such as sales per square foot, the retail market should innovate by creating experiences for customers and relate KPI's back to consumer reaction. In fact, Rachel Schectman's groundbreaking experience-driven retail format combines elements of themed magazine editorials that change often, like a gallery and sells product as a traditional retailer would. Sponsors partner with STORY to create 'living advertorials' (Paton 2017: par. 17) with a theme where various companies, both established and new, can feature products that customers cannot easily find. STORY's themes have included 'Fresh Story' sponsored by Jet.com, and 'Color Story' sponsored by Benjamin Moore (Paton 2017: par. 17). According to Ms Schectman, '[i]f time is the ultimate luxury and people want a higher return on investment of their time, you need to give them a reason to be in a physical space' (Paton 2017: par. 18).

Demographics

Retailing shifts are now determined by consumers' wants and needs (Lewis and Dart 2014). The millennial and baby boom generations are large in number, control a large amount of spending power (Donnelly and Scaff 2013; Dorie et al. 2017), and seek out entertaining shopping experiences (Moore and Carpenter 2008). In addition, generation X, millennials, and bridge millennials, those customers 30–40 years of age, want product *plus* meaningful experiences (PYMNTS.com 2018); a survey conducted by PYMNTS.com of 2500 American consumers found that 50 per cent of customers want an omni-channel

1. experience. However, generally customers do not understand the concept of
 2. omni-channel retailing, as it is seamlessly enabled in back-of-house opera-
 3. tions (Lewis and Dart 2014; Levy et al. 2014).

5. **Technology**

6. Technology is transforming the future of retail (Paton 2017). Big data and AI
 7. will help retailers target their customers by providing suggestions as to what
 8. sizes and fits match with product previously purchased. AR and VR will assist
 9. customers to place furniture in their home or trying on clothing without
 10. having to go to a store (Poremba 2017). Shopping is a social experience and
 11. customers do crave interactions. Examples could include an afternoon with
 12. friends and sharing a great find or a special look or just talking to a sales
 13. associate, which brings the physical store back to its roots (Morgan 2018).
 14. Companies such as Rebecca Minkoff have combined technological aspects of
 15. shopping (e.g., RFID, interactive mirrors) with social aspects such as their 'My
 16. RM' community that allows customers to share their experiences via the RM
 17. app (Culp 2015).

19. **PHYSICAL VERSUS EXPERIENTIAL ASPECTS**

20. Retailers need to be accessible to customers wherever and whenever the
 21. customer wants, and this means that retailers need to view various touch
 22. points in a holistic manner (Lewis and Dart 2014). The retail store of the future
 23. (SOF) will need become a combination of the store and digital which allows
 24. the flexibility for the customer to move between the two on their terms and
 25. based on relationships created with a brand (Paton 2017).

26. There have been a number of scholarly inquiries into physical and experi-
 27. ential aspects of shopping. Two of the most applicable to the current study are
 28. Ballantine and Parsons' (2010) research into specific atmospheric store attrib-
 29. utes that contribute to consumer outcomes and Pine and Gilmore's (1999)
 30. writings and framework on experiences within the retail servicescape.

31. Ballantine and Parsons (2010) pondered how specific atmospheric cues
 32. would impact consumers' hedonic and utilitarian perceptions of a retail store.
 33. The authors utilized Turley and Milliman's original work in establishing 57
 34. categories of atmospheric cues that could be classified as: 'external', 'general
 35. interior', 'layout and design', 'point of purchase and decoration' and 'human
 36. variables' (2000: 642). By utilizing a qualitative interview method, the research-
 37. ers were able to cull down the number of categories to: 'Lighting', 'sound',
 38. 'space', 'colour', 'layout', 'product display', 'design features', 'comfort features',
 39. 'crowding', 'lighting' and 'employees' (2000: 645–49). The authors then sub-
 40. classified the stimuli into 'facilitating' and 'attractive' (2000: 645–49) groupings.
 41. This framework is helpful to the present inquiry, as it offers a baseline to begin
 42. development of thematic categories.

43. Pine and Gilmore's *Experience Economy* offers another valuable resource
 44. for development of thematic categories, as it lends a practice-oriented lens
 45. with which to understand experiential elements. The authors developed a
 46. four-quadrant framework that contained 'entertainment', 'esthetic', 'educa-
 47. tional' and 'escapist' (1999: 46) categories. In addition, the authors note that
 48. the elements can be combined into synergistic categories, such as 'edutain-
 49. ment' (1999: 64). The combination of the two above writings informs the
 50. current research, in that both physical and non-physical store elements are
 51. considered.
 52.

EXEMPLAR CASES OF EXPERIENTIAL RETAILING

As mentioned earlier, an experiential focus is not new to retail. In the early days of retailing, merchants were on the selling floor, speaking to the customers, helping customers find the right outfit or product to satisfy their desires (Reilly 1966). Disney has a long tradition of creating memorable experiences in their parks and stores (D23 2018). When Howard Schultz joined Starbucks in 1982, he had a vision based on what he experienced in Milan with the growth of coffeehouses, thus Starbucks became one of the first retailers to create a truly personalized experienced (Cuneo 1994). Customers were able to place an order for a coffee drink that was individualized to their needs. Simultaneously, Starbucks created a community where customers could visit for as long as they desired to meet friends or use the free Wi-Fi.

In the early 2000s, under Michael Gould's leadership at Bloomingdale's, upscale and novelty food venues, David Burke, Magnolia Bakery, were incorporated into the flagship locations to entice the customer to spend more time in the stores. In 2009, the cosmetic department in Bloomingdale's 59th street flagship was remodelled to reflect the growth of technology with the flair of the theatre (Moin 2011).

In 2001, Apple opened its first two physical stores providing the customers with a place to try before they buy. According to Steve Jobs, Apple's CEO,

[t]he Apple stores offer an amazing new way to buy a computer. Rather than just hear about megahertz and megabytes, customers can now learn and experience the things they can do with a computer, like make movies, burn custom music CDs, and publish their digital photos on a personal website.

(2001: par. 2)

The Genius Bar, an Apple tech support station, was launched to assist customers and connect them to the larger Mac community.

In 2011, Ron Johnson, the architect of the Genius Bar, joined JC Penney to update their retail experience. Johnson's vision included an every-day-low-pricing strategy (EDLP) (Levy et al. 2014), eliminating the daily and weekly markdowns, promotions and coupons that are prevalent in retailing. In addition to changing the pricing schema, his plans included updating product assortment in the stores, bringing in more contemporary brands, Joe Fresh, Nanette Lepore and Martha Stewart's Kitchen while eliminating tried and true brands, Arizona and Worthington. Town Square was incorporated into the store replacing the centre core, high margin businesses. The Town Square was to be similar in nature to Apple's Genius Bar, providing an experience for the customers where rotational monthly attractions and services would be provided; free haircuts for back-to-school or free ice cream in the summer (Mattioli 2012). Unfortunately, the changes did not improve JC Penney's business, their customers missed the savings provided by the promotions and coupons and their favourite brands. Where Ron Johnson may have been on track was in developing an experience for the customer.

Retailers are embracing the community-focused and experiential aspects that customers now desire. Many brands are moving their retail model, not just to sell product, but develop excitement for the customer. Nike opened stores where customers can customize sneakers or play basketball while in the store (Digital Signage 2018). Kohl's formed a partnership with Amazon in

1. select stores for their smart home product and allowing customers to return
 2. product purchased on Amazon to make it easier for the customer (Kohls.com
 3. 2018). The partnership drove traffic into Kohl's, and effective July 2019, all
 4. Kohl's stores will be accepting returns to Amazon as well as expanding the
 5. smart home concept to 200 stores. Michelle Gass, Kohl's CEO states

6.
 7. Amazon and Kohl's have a shared passion in providing outstanding
 8. customer service, and this unique partnership combines Kohl's strong
 9. nationwide store footprint and omnichannel capabilities with Amazon's
 10. reach and customer loyalty. This new service is another example of how
 11. Kohl's is delivering innovation to drive traffic to our stores and bring
 12. more relevance to our customers.

13. (Berthiamue 2019)

14.
 15. Macy's launched a tech centric b8ta shop showcasing the newest tech prod-
 16. ucts that customers can try before they buy. In 2018, Macy's announced a part-
 17. nership for 100 Facebook vendors to sell product at The Market in select stores
 18. (Macys.com 2018). In fact, customer experience may not only rely solely on
 19. product or activities. Adrian Cheng's Hong Kong Victoria Docks development
 20. will include retail stores along with a museum, an ultra-luxury hotel,
 21. apartments and offices (Friedman 2018). In 2009, his Shanghai Art Mall
 22. combined art and shopping as well as an urban farm where customers could
 23. grow herbs and take them home. New developments have changed the way
 24. that the physical space is utilized allowing for building a community, as seen
 25. in the Apple or Starbucks models (Friedman 2018). The new retail model can
 26. focus on sustainability and community, as seen with the growth of All Birds
 27. and Everlane (Ho 2018), which is reflective of increasing demand for authen-
 28. ticity and transparency in branding (Hill and Lee 2012).

29. Previous academic literature addresses atmospheric elements that may
 30. contribute to consumer experience within the retail service scape (Ballantine
 31. and Parsons 2010; Pine and Gilmore 1999). Concurrently, up-to-date metrics
 32. are produced by consulting firms such as Boston Consulting Group (BCG)
 33. (2018) and PYMNTS.com (2018), however no study has attempted to triangu-
 34. late these sources with popular press sources, which are reflective of current
 35. trends in the industry. Therefore, this study sought to: analyse the momen-
 36. tum of press coverage trends pertaining to experiential elements that shape
 37. consumer perception; and to update the consideration set for both researchers
 38. and retailers by proposing supplemental experiential dimensions that might
 39. broaden Ballantine and Parsons' (2010) framework.

40. **METHOD**

41. The present study used a qualitative, content analysis method. IRB permis-
 42. sions were not required, as only public secondary data was utilized. Content
 43. analysis is an accepted method to analyse written data that is available in
 44. publications such as newspapers and magazines (Elo and Kyngäs 2007). Such
 45. analysis is similar to other types of qualitative analysis, in that textual data
 46. are systematically organized into thematic categories and reduced to a small
 47. number of major themes with shared meanings, to describe a phenomenon
 48. (Elo and Kyngäs 2007; Loranger 2017). Elo and Kyngäs' (2007) deductive
 49. content analysis call for a macro-to-micro approach, where data are gathered,
 50. grouped, and categorized, to abstract about their meaning.
 51.
 52.

Upon consultation with the authors' university library staff, EBSCO was chosen as the appropriate database to conduct the analysis, as it aggregates a wide variety of publications on a global basis. Using EBSCO gave the researchers the opportunity to sample retail publications and news articles that were representative of a broad number of retailing categories, such as apparel, home, electronics, real estate, automotive, gifts and beauty. The database also contains articles from specific sub-segments of the retailing industry, such as interior design, packaging, and technology. The authors chose 2008–18 as the range of analysis, as the iPhone was first released in June of 2007, hence establishing mobile commerce as a viable counterpart to bricks-and-mortar.

As the purpose of the study is based on retail experience, the researchers initially searched the EBSCO database by year (2008–18) for the term 'retail experience' to determine the population of articles, which resulted in 1414 articles written on the subject. The researchers then required a framework to begin classifying terms and turned to Ballantine and Parsons' (2010) environmental factors, as follows: layout; lighting; sound; colour; comfort features; crowding/functionality; product display; and employees. The co-primary investigators only searched 2018 initially, to give comparison to the Ballantine and Parsons (2010) framework, which was constructed eight years ago. The aim was to combine and modify the terms, as well as to search for additional terms that might need to be added to the set of key words. After the two researchers developed a list of themes, they negotiated on what the set of key words would be, which resulted in the following set of terms: layout; lighting; sound; colour; comfort features; crowding/functionality; product display; employees; pricing; technology; convenience; uniqueness/personalization; community; and entertainment/escapism/discovery.

The researchers then divided up search years, with Researcher One analysing 2008–12, and Researcher Two analysing 2013–18. 2018 was re-analysed using the negotiated code list. This resulted in a total of 183 useable articles (see Table 1).

Year	No. Search results	No. Usable articles	Per cent useable
2008	126	25	20 per cent
2009	88	10	11 per cent
2010	81	13	16 per cent
2011	85	5	6 per cent
2012	197	14	7 per cent
2013	135	6	4 per cent
2014	133	11	8 per cent
2015	132	16	12 per cent
2016	144	15	10 per cent
2017	131	25	19 per cent
2018	162	43	27 per cent

Table 1: Summary of searched and useable articles by year.

1. Terms that were not an exact match to the code list were categorized
 2. under the best approximation. For instance, 'technology infused space'
 3. (Digital Signage 2018: 10) was classified as 'technology', while a unique digital
 4. interactive experience by surrounding consumers with high-definition images
 5. of iconic New York basketball courts' (Digital Signage 2018: 10) was classified
 6. as 'entertainment/escapism/discovery'.

7.
 8. **RESULTS**

9. **Overall results versus useable articles**

10. As seen in Figure 1, a top-line analysis of overall search results reveals
 11. that there was a 132% spike in 2011–12 in coverage in the popular press
 12. regarding the term 'retail experience', and there was a corresponding 180%
 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30.



31. Figure 1: Number of overall search results for the term 'Retail Experience'.



32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. Figure 2: Number of useable 'Retail Experience' articles.

increase in coverage based on useable articles that contained negotiated key words, as indicated in Figure 2. This may be attributed to the launch of JC Penney's retail experience strategy that was engineered by CEO Ron Johnson (Mattioli 2012). However, overall counts remain relatively stable between 2013 and 2018 (Figure 1), only varying by 24% maximum between 2017 and 2018, illustrating the maintained importance of the subject of retail experience over the most recent five years. This maintained level of discussion is in stark contrast to the fluctuations realized between 2008 and 2012 in both overall and useable results (Figures 1 and 2). By contrast, useable results increased 187% from 2016 to 2018 (Figure 2), which indicates a significant increase in activity of key terms related to retail experience being discussed in the popular press.

Trends in specific terms

Ballantine and Parsons

Of all the negotiated Ballantine and Parsons (2010) terms, layout, product display, and employees were the most mentioned, with counts of 42, 67 and 52, respectively (Table 2). Of these three elements, layout appeared to be relatively static over the years, as opposed to product display and employees, whose mentions in the press quadrupled and tripled respectively from 2016 to 2018. Also, colour and comfort features remained relatively static from 2009 to 2016, and doubled from 2017 to 2018. As a total group of terms, the Ballantine and Parsons (2010) elements mentions were stable from 2013 to 2016, and then realized a five-fold increase from 2016 to 2018, which is reflective of the increased importance of atmospheric elements that impact retail experience.

| | Layout | Lighting | Sound | Colour | Comfort features | Crowding | Product display | Employees | Total |
|-------|--------|----------|-------|--------|------------------|----------|-----------------|-----------|-------|
| 2008 | 10 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 64 |
| 2009 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 26 |
| 2010 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 16 |
| 2011 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| 2012 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 3 | 36 |
| 2013 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 16 |
| 2014 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 14 |
| 2015 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 19 |
| 2016 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 10 |
| 2017 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 13 | 5 | 32 |
| 2018 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 12 | 10 | 50 |
| Total | 42 | 24 | 17 | 32 | 33 | 24 | 67 | 52 | |

Table 2: Ballantine and Parsons (2010), elements-article counts by year.

| | Price | Tech | Convenience | Unique/
personalization | Community | Entertainment/
escapism/
Discovery | Totals |
|--------|-------|------|-------------|----------------------------|-----------|--|--------|
| 2008 | 3 | 10 | 9 | 10 | 5 | 11 | 48 |
| 2009 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 16 |
| 2010 | 1 | 10 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 31 |
| 2011 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| 2012 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 23 |
| 2013 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 17 |
| 2014 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 29 |
| 2015 | 3 | 12 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 8 | 39 |
| 2016 | 4 | 12 | 9 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 38 |
| 2017 | 5 | 25 | 10 | 24 | 10 | 24 | 98 |
| 2018 | 2 | 25 | 13 | 22 | 23 | 25 | 110 |
| Totals | 25 | 123 | 61 | 81 | 68 | 99 | |

Table 3: Store of the future (SOF) elements-article counts by year.

SOF

Upon analysis of the SOF elements added by the researchers, it appears that pricing remained static over the entire period 2008–18, and pricing was the term with the least number of mentions of all SOF terms (Figure 3). This may be indicative of pricing being perceived as more of a given by consumers as part of the consumption experience (Lewis and Dart 2014). By contrast, technology realized the largest number of mentions (Figure 3), and this is due to technology's increased role in overall retail strategy (Levy et al. 2014). Convenience term mentions doubled in the period 2015–18 (Figure 3), indicating more of a focus on omni-channel strategies that connect with consumer whenever and wherever they wish. In addition, Amazon realized huge growth over this period, with their Prime and Prime Now programmes with rapid fulfilment of purchases from an endless aisle (Amazon 2015). Uniqueness/Personalization encountered a huge upswing in mentions in the period from 2014 to 2018 (Figure 3), and this may be attributed to the rise in popularity of such platforms such as Nike customization and enabling technologies such as 3D printing and customer-as-designer interfaces (Digital Signage 2018). Community and Entertainment/ Escapism/Discovery saw a sharp spike in mentions from 2017 to 2018 (Figure 3), indicating the rise of the millennial consumers (Dorie et al. 2015), the significant momentum of stores such as STORY and Rebecca Minkoff (Culp 2015; Paton 2017), and incorporation of interactive technologies in stores such as H&M and Macy's (Macys.com 2018). The fact that technology, Unique/Personalization, and Entertainment/ Escapism/Discovery were the top three categories of key words, with 123, 81, and 99 occurrences, respectively, seems to be indicative of technology serving as the under-layer that enables the other two categories in the retail servicescape (Culp 2015). Upon conclusion of this research, it is apparent that further studies on retail experience should consider technology, Unique/ Personalization, and Entertainment/ Escapism/Discovery as additional elements.

Discussion

The present study was successful by: quantifying trends in popular press coverage that are illustrative of the changing definitions of experiential retailing, while; generating new emergent themes from the press regarding important aspects of 'the SOF' that extend Ballantine and Parsons' (2010) framework. The researchers accomplished this by utilizing Ballantine and Parsons' (2010) environmental factors and Pine and Gilmore's (1999) *Experience Economy* framework to outline shifts in important physical and experiential environmental factor trends.

The present research was necessary, as Ballantine and Parsons' (2010) inquiry was conducted nearly a decade ago and did not consider newly emerged trends in modern retailing, such as technology, convenience, personalization and community. Consumer segments have also shifted over the past eight years since Ballantine and Parsons' (2010) research, with demographic and psychographic changes taking place, including the rise of millennials as the dominant consumer group (Donnelly and Scaff 2013; Dorie et al. 2017), who are well known as technologically savant, and as demanding experiences while shopping across multiple channels (Moore and Carpenter 2008).

Non-academic writings such as Pine and Gilmore's (1999) *Experience Economy* considered elements of escapism and entertainment, however these elements have developed past what the researchers considered due to the advent of AI, AR, VR; these advanced technologies enable an enhanced escapism and entertainment experience. Although Pine and Gilmore's (1999) contribution is important to the discussion of retail experience, it also was conducted twenty years ago, and so further consideration of the current state of the elements contained within the framework is necessary. Other writings, such as Lewis and Dart (2014) discuss the changes that have occurred since the late 1990's to present day, such as increased saturation of brands available to consumers, the shift towards omni-channel retailing, and a change in emphasis from tangible aspects such as price and product to experiential elements and a mental connection. The present research provides data to support the position that experiential retailing approaches have become paramount to retailers' strategic efforts, and that elements such as pricing and product are not at the top of the consumers' minds, as these are taken for granted as being provided to customers (Lewis and Dart 2014). The present research also considered these non-academic writings, in addition to Ballantine and Parsons (2010) and utilized the popular press to successfully create an updated and extended set of experiential elements, which was the purpose of the research.

Practical implications

Results of this research have a variety of implications for both retailers and academics in the realms of commerce and research. First, the present research serves to re-frame retailers' emphasis of competing on price and product. Retailers must consider the fact that consumers merely expect low prices along with excellent selection and quality, but they do not view this as a point of parity in the market (Lewis and Dart 2014) as they are completely overwhelmed by the amount of choice in the market (Schwartz 2009). In addition, the results of the present research indicate that elements of retail experience such as layout, product display, and employees continue to be important considerations, and that the latter two elements are increasing in importance. This is an interesting development, as many categories of retailers such

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1. as Target and Nordstrom have moved to smaller store footprints and have
 2. emphasized creative displays and employees who are trained to deliver
 3. excellent customer service, while Nike and Macy's are installing participatory
 4. areas where consumers can interact with product and experiences. These
 5. brands are using these to continue to develop loyalty with their target
 6. customers (Digital Signage 2018; Ho 2018; Macys.com 2018). Analysis of trends
 7. indicates that customers are increasingly compelled by visual engagement and
 8. like to remain and stay in a 'Third Space' (Cuneo 1994) as colour and comfort
 9. features were found to have maintained their importance from 2009 to 2016,
 10. and then increased two-fold from 2016 to 2018, which is again illustrated in
 11. examples such as Nike's integration of sporting areas in stores (Nike 2018) or
 12. Apple and Macy's providing consumers areas to play and test out products
 13. (Friedman 2018; Macys.com 2018).

14. The present research results also underscore the case for necessity of
 15. omni-channel integration strategies and infusion of technology into the retail
 16. servicescape, which improves convenience, uniqueness/personalization, and
 17. entertainment/escapism/discovery factors that millennial consumers demand
 18. (Donnelly and Scaff 2013). Analysis found that convenience theme frequency
 19. doubled from 2015 to 2018, and this is in line with the growth of the millennial
 20. consumer group and Donnelly and Scaff's (2013) observations of millennial
 21. consumer characteristics. Observed increases in community and entertain-
 22. ment/escapism/discovery is also in line with the growth of this consumer
 23. cohort and current trends in co-customization (Digital Signage 2018) that
 24. is enabled by tech-driven in-store experiences at retailers such as Rebecca
 25. Minkoff (RM) and STORY (Culp 2015; Paton 2017). With the above in
 26. mind, retailers need to consider what Emily Culp (2015) terms the 'complex
 27. ecosystem' of 'layers of technology' (nap) that exist in an intuitive manner as
 28. a seamless foundation to enable consumer experience and participation. Culp
 29. states that she never 'does technology for the sake of technology' (2015: n.pag.),
 30. but instead that technology is viewed as just encouraging convenience,
 31. uniqueness/personalization and entertainment/escapism/discovery factors
 32. for RM's millennial consumer within the retail servicescape. Retailers should
 33. use RM and STORY as exemplar firms from which to derive ideas and best
 34. practices to connect with both the millennial and baby boomer consumer.

35. The present research outlines also outlines areas that are prime opportuni-
 36. ties for academic collaboration with industry partners, which many retail and
 37. fashion programmes today are keen to pursue. Results indicate that academic
 38. researchers need to focus on inquiry pertaining to more advanced retail tech-
 39. nologies, such as AR, VR, AI, co-customization interfaces, and digital printing
 40. technologies, as inquiry in this area serves to add to the already robust body
 41. of knowledge in the areas of consumer experience, and has immediate and
 42. implementable implications for corporate partners. Initiation of such research
 43. projects have the potential to generate and solidify interest and funding from
 44. such partners who seek to gain more knowledge in these key areas.

46. **Limitations and future research**

48. Although the study did include a diverse range of publications from the EBSCO
 49. database, including *WWD*, *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times*, publica-
 50. tions included in the study were limited to those featured on EBSCO. There
 51. are additional electronic sources that could be considered, such as *Business*
 52. of Fashion, NRF.com and Retail Dive. The research was also limited to

qualitative method, and future researchers could consider data mining techniques that include quantitative analysis of key terms. Also, analysis of the present study's key terms off social media might triangulate the findings contained in the present study, in terms of customer reaction to specific brands.

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