SBS Journal of Applied Business Research
Volume XIII, Issue 1, February 2025
DOI: 10.70301/JOUR/SBS-JABR/2025/13/1/6

The Effectiveness of Omni-channel Strategy in Optimizing Customer Engagement and Purchase Decision – The Case of the Wedding Services Sector in Hong Kong

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Article Information

- **Date of Receival:** [22/12/2024]
- **Date of Acceptance:** [02/02/2025]
- **JEL Classification Codes:** M31, L81, C83

Abstract

This empirical quantitative research examines the effects of omni-channel strategy in optimizing customer engagement and purchase decision through the case of the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. It tests eleven hypotheses with a survey of a valid representative sample of married couples (n = 305). By using the partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM), the results reveal that 7 out of 11 hypotheses are supported. The factors of usefulness, ease of use and personalization among the omni-channel constellation are identified as the leading determinants of customers' acceptance of omni-channel strategy in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. Personalization as well as ease of use emerge as prominent predictors of customer engagement and purchase decision respectively ($p < .001$), significantly increasing customer engagement and purchase decision in the omni-channel retailing context. Furthermore, the findings reveal that superior customer engagement has a positive effect on purchase decision. This study provides several significant theoretical and managerial implications in unveiling the effectiveness of omni-channel strategy in the research domain of omni-channel service retailing.

Keywords: *Omni-channel Service Retailing, Customer Engagement, Purchase Decision, Wedding Services;*

1. Introduction

The business model of retailing has been undergoing a disruptive transformation over the past decades through Internet, mobile computing, big data, social media and other new emerging technologies (Gerea et al., 2021; Özbük et al., 2020). The world of retailing has been evolving dramatically from mono-channel retailing, multi-channel retailing, cross-channel retailing towards omni-channel retailing (Verhoef et al., 2015). Omni-channel retailing conceptualizes the holistic customer experiences through the connection of online, mobile, social networks and traditional channels to provide integrated information and services (Aiolfi & Sabbadin, 2019; Çakiroğlu & Çengel, 2020; Shi et al., 2019). The channels are integrated and the interaction is not emphasized on channels but on the brand (Gerea et al., 2021; Huuhka et al., 2014; Özbük et al., 2020). Omni-channel strategy is a customer-centric retail strategy that puts emphasis on the synergy and seamless integration of different online and offline channels to maximize customer experience and interaction throughout the customer journey (Hsia et al., 2020; Lu, 2017; Melero et al., 2016; Serrano, 2019; Sun et al., 2020; Thaichon et al., 2023; Ye et al., 2018). It places the customer, rather than corporate functional silos at the core of the strategy (Gerea et al., 2021; Paccard, 2021).

The concepts of customer engagement and customer decision-making process have been changed significantly with the advancement of digital technologies (Fulgoni, 2014). Omni-channel customers can move simultaneously among myriad of digital and physical touch points and channels by diversified innovative omni-channel initiatives to engage with the brand through the five stages of the customer decision-making process: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase stage (Manser Payne et al., 2017; Mosquera et al., 2017, Walton, 2020). Several theoretical models have been developed in past decades to understand the customers' acceptance and intention to adopt technology-based innovation in retailing. These models include Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology Model (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003) and Extended Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology Model (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012). However, previous literature on the study of these theoretical models in the omni-channel retailing context remain somewhat limited and unstructured (Herrero-Crespo et al., 2021). Although the literature has covered the study of customers' acceptance of omni-channel approach towards purchase intention or purchase decision (Hussein & Hassan, 2017; Juaneda-Ayensa et al., 2016; Wulandari and Sauki, 2022), few attempts have been made on the exploration of factors that impact on customer engagement in the omni-channel context (Hussein & Hassan, 2017). Moreover, majority of the extant research concentrate on the omni-channel study of consumer products retailing industries (Eriksson et al., 2022; Herrero-Crespo et al., 2021; Juaneda-Ayensa et al., 2016; Kazancoglu & Aydin, 2018; Lim et al., 2022; Lu, 2017; Peiris et al., 2021; Truong, 2020; Ye et al., 2018; Yin et al., 2022). There was only limited research with emphasis on omni-channel customer experience in the service-based retail sectors (Gerea et al., 2021; Salvietti et al., 2022).

Wedding is considered as an event of a lifetime with diversity in regions, traditions, cultures and castes (Sahu et al., 2024). Wedding services is a customer-centric business with high involvement and high degree of personalization (Daniels & Wosicki, 2020; MarketResearch. com, 2021). It mixes with diversified businesses and multiple smaller and medium sized enterprises contributing to the creation of a wedding ceremony. Wedding services business directly or indirectly involves more than 100 industries and the whole industry generates sales revenue while each individual service providers share part of it (MarketResearch.com,

2021; Terrell, 2019). The wedding services include wedding reception and catering, wedding planning service, wedding attire service, wedding rings, wedding floral decoration, make-up and hair styling service, wedding photography and videography, music and entertainment, transportation, honeymoon etc. (Daniels & Wosicki, 2020).

The wedding market expenditure in Hong Kong was approximately HK$17.3 billion (US$2.22 billion) in 2024. Hong Kong is one of the most expensive cities to get married in the world that the average wedding expenses per couple was HK$410,079 (US$52,690) in 2024. The most expensive item of wedding expenditure is wedding banquet services, which represents about 46% of total wedding cost (ESDlife, 2024). With refer to the Census and Statistics Department, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (2024), the median age at the first marriage is between 29 to 32 years old. Wedding couples are keen to leverage different physical and digital channels for planning and organizing their weddings (Cheng, 2019). They seek unique and personalized customer experience during the wedding planning journey. Besides the needs of physical stores and personal selling, social media and e-commerce play vital role in the wedding journey from engagement towards the wedding ceremony. Couples are searching for latest wedding trends on web, sharing wedding happiness and memorable moments with friends and expressing comments and reviews of different wedding services through social media platforms (Singh, 2016).

Figure 1 illustrate the omni-channel customer journey for wedding attire and wedding banquet services which demonstrate that wedding services business in Hong Kong represents a sector well placed to leverage omni-channel strategy in maximizing the customer experience. However, there was a dearth of study regarding the impact of omni-channel strategy on customer engagement and purchase decision with a focus on retailing of services, notably the industry of wedding services business and geographical location of Hong Kong.

By synthesizing the theoretical models of TAM, UTATU and UTAUT2, this research extends the current literature and develops a holistic approach to investigate the effectiveness of omni-channel strategy. This study aims to determine the key drivers and inhibitors that influence customers' acceptance of omni-channel strategy and to examine the influence of omni-channel strategy in optimizing customer engagement together with purchase decisions in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

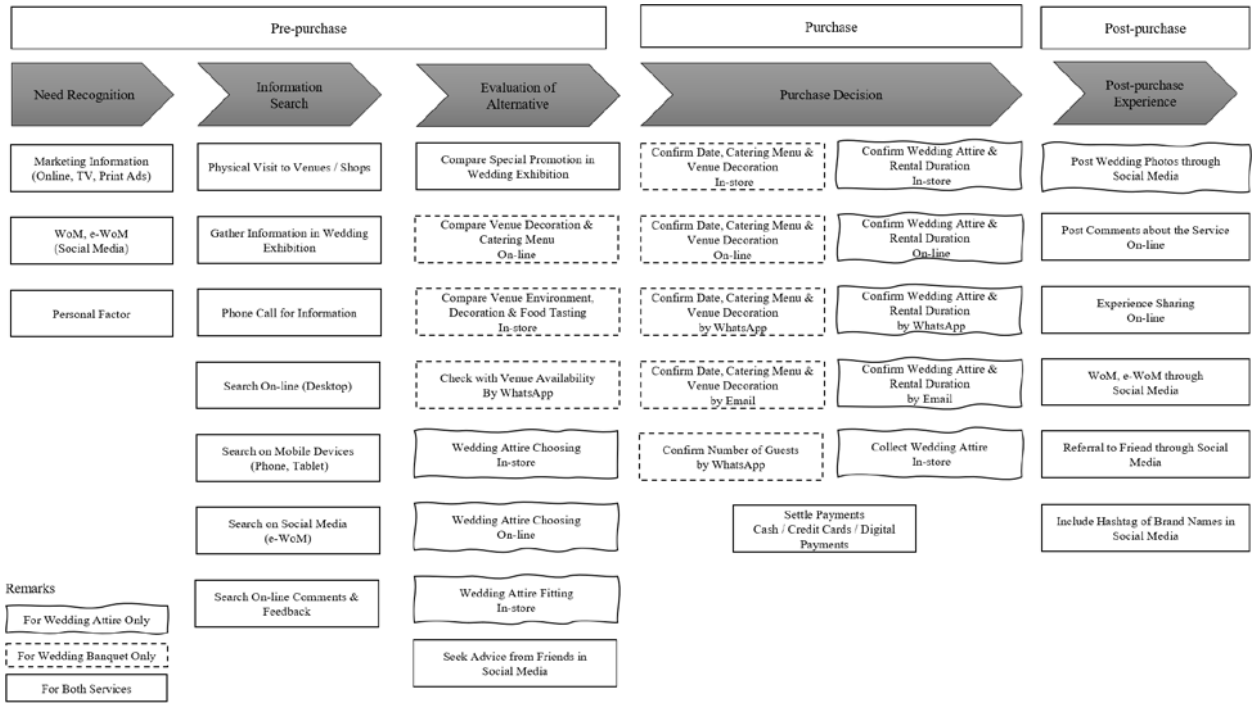


Figure 1. Omni-channel Customer Journey for Wedding Attire and Wedding Banquet Services

Note. Omni-channel Customer Journey for Wedding Banquet Services. Adapted from "Engaging Omni-Channel Consumers During Purchase Decision," by L. Jinzhao, 2017, *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing*, p.12 (https://www.proquest.com/openview/81e739456bdc00128f22d4ef1001839f/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750).

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation

2.1 Omni-channel Strategy

The word of "omni" is a Latin word with the meaning of "all" and "universal" (Özbük et al. 2020; Shi et al., 2019). Channel refers to the contact points or method enabling two-way communication between the brand and customers (Verhoef et al., 2015). With the progression of online, mobile, tablets and social media channels, the channel choices are increasing in the retailing environment (Huuhka et al., 2014; Verhoef et al., 2015).

The concept of omni-channel retailing as the interaction with customers through countless channels including both online and offline channels was initially introduced by Rigby (2011). Belu & Marinoiu (2014) defined omni-channel strategy as a new distribution strategy with the combination of integrated information systems to drive customer experience. Later, different scholars shed light on the concept of omni-channel strategy as a customer-focus approach to maximize the customer experience and interaction through the synergy and integration of different online and offline channels (Hamouda, 2019; Hsia et al., 2020; Lu, 2017; Melero et al., 2016; Serrano, 2019; Sun et al., 2020; Ye et al., 2018). It emphasized the complete alignment of different channels and touch points with an optimal experience between brand and customers, rather than the silos in different business functions of the corporate (Edwards, 2021; Gerea et al., 2021; Huré et al., 2017; Paccard, 2021; Thaichon et al., 2023).

2.2 Omni-channel Customer Experience throughout Customer Journey

Customer experience can be conceptualized in different stages under the customer journey of pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stage (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Verhoef et al. (2009 as cited in Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p. 70) emphasized "customer experience as a holistic construct from a retailing context which includes the affective, cognitive, emotional, social, and physical customer responses to the retailer". As digitalization has enriched as a global phenomenon, the customer journey of pre-purchase, purchase together with post-purchase stage has been changed tremendously (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The customer journey is shaped by various omni-channel behaviours. Showrooming, webrooming, click-and-collect, purchase in shop deliver at home and diversified online and offline shopping patterns have been established to bring customer-centric experience in customer journey (Çakiroğlu & Çengel, 2020; Mosquera et al., 2017; ÖZbük et al., 2020). In facing the challenges during COVID pandemic, omni-channel buying pattern for instance, purchase online with shop delivery has become normal buying routine for over 30% of Americans (Briedis et al., 2021).

2.3 Omni-channel Customer Engagement and Purchase Decisio

Customer engagement cycle is composed with different stages with deep connections between brand and customers which can contribute to connection, interaction, participation, satisfaction, retention, commitment, advocacy and engagement (Sashi, 2012). The five stages of consumer decision-making process with need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase stage involve cognitive and emotional influences by different groups such as family, friends, advertisers or role models (Engel et al., 1985 as cited in Mosquera et al., 2017; Kotler, 2000 as cited in Prasad et al., 2019; Schiffman and Kanuk, 2010 as cited in Lu, 2017).

The concept of customer engagement cycle and customer decision-making process have been changed tremendously with the progression of digital technologies (Fulgoni, 2014). Consumer engagement combined the digital technologies with consumer actions in an engagement ecosystem (Morgan-Thomas et al.,2020). High level of customer satisfaction and trust would be resulted from the synchronization between customers and brands through the interactions across all channels (Taheri et al., 2024).

With the combination of digital and physical channels, customers could move freely among different online and traditional channels to engage with the brands through the five stages of customer decision-making process (Manser Payne et al., 2017; Mosquera et al., 2017). The decision-making process was no longer a one-way communication from marketers to consumers (Fulgoni, 2014). The decision-making process has become a circular journey where omni-channel customers can act as the advocacy role and value co-creator through sharing comments, feedback and experiences over social media network, potentially triggering further cycles of purchase (Sashi, 2012; Taheri et al., 2024). Other potential customers could compare and contrast all the available feedback from past customer experience through diversified channels and make the best purchase decisions (Taheri et al., 2024).

2.4 Theories of Understanding Consumer's Acceptance of Technology-Based Innovations in Retailing

Various theoretical frameworks have been developed in past decades to explore the consumer's acceptance and intention to adopt technology-based innovation. There have been numerous attempts in previous research to apply TAM, UTAUT and UTAUT2 theoretical

models in investigating the acceptance and intention of use of different new technologies, for instance e-commerce, Internet banking, mobile banking and mobile commerce in the retail sector (Arcand et al., 2017; Hussein & Hassan, 2017; Natarajan et al., 2017; Pantano & di Pietro, 2012). TAM, UTAUT and UTAUT2 have been applied to explore the relationship between customers' acceptance and technology innovation in the omni-channel contexts (Gerea et al., 2021; Özbük et al., 2020). However, the study of the application of these theoretical models in the omni-channel context remains quite limited and fragmented (Herrero-Crespo et al., 2021). In particular, most of the literature put emphasis on the study of customers' acceptance of omni-channel approach with regard to purchase intention or purchase decision (Hussein & Hassan, 2017; Juaneda-Ayensa et al., 2016; Wulandari and Sauki, 2022). Study from Salvietti et al. (2022) identified that omni-channel customer experience with the focus of customer engagement should be one of the future research directions. Nevertheless, there was insufficient study regarding the impact on customer engagement in the omni-channel context by TAM, UTAUT and UTAUT2 (Hussein & Hassan, 2017).

Moreover, there was only limited research with emphasis on the customer acceptance of omni-channel in the service-based retail sectors (Gerea et al., 2021; Salvietti et al., 2022) in comparison with the majority of the prior research focusing on the omni-channel study of consumer products retailing industries (Eriksson et al., 2022; Herrero-Crespo et al., 2021; Juaneda-Ayensa et al., 2016; Kazancoglu & Aydin, 2018; Lim et al., 2022; Lu, 2017; Peiris et al., 2021; Truong, 2020; Ye et al., 2018; Yin et al., 2022). According to Salvietti et al. (2022, p. 1163), more than half of recent omni-channel research put emphasis on consumer products retailing of "fashion, apparel and accessories, food and grocery and consumer electronics" while other research did not clearly mention about the industry for study. Omni-channel study in service sector was scarce except with the case of the banking industry.

This work fills the research gaps regarding the limited study of omni-channel strategy in service-based retail sectors and the application of technology acceptance frameworks: TAM, UTAUT and UTAUT2 in the omni-channel context. To the best knowledge from the researcher, this study is the first to synthesize and extend TAM, UTAUT and UTAUT2 in investigating the impact of omni-channel strategy on customer engagement and purchase decision in the specific service-based retail context of the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. In view of a wide range of variable choices from these theories, this study includes the variable choices which are applicable in the omni-channel context of the wedding services sector in Hong Kong including perceived ease of use (PEOU), perceived usefulness (PU), social influence (SI) and additional new variables namely personalization (PE) and perceived risk of information privacy (PR) towards customer engagement (CE) and purchase decision (PD).

3. Research Model and Hypotheses Development

3.1 Research Model

This research model (Figure 2) synthesizes a conceptual model incorporating the theoretical models of TAM, UTAUT and UTAUT2. Based on this research model, eleven hypotheses have been developed as a basis for determining the key drivers and inhibitors of customers' acceptance of omni-channel strategy and their impacts on customer engagement and purchase decision in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

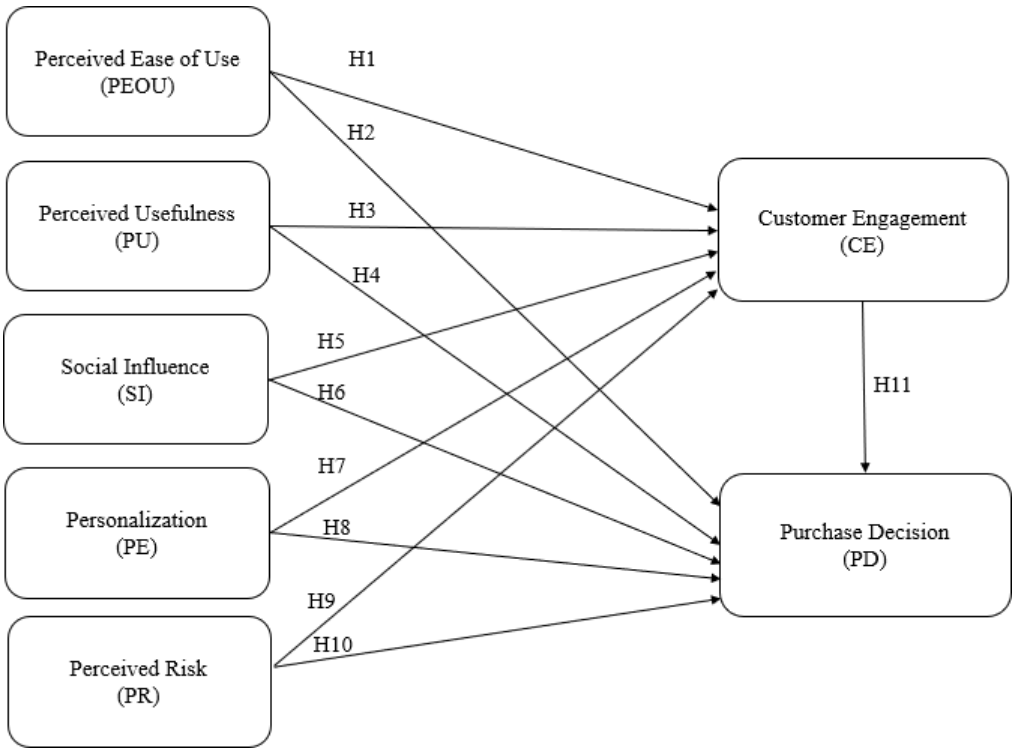


Figure 2. Research Model

Note. Research Model. Own work.

3.2 Hypotheses Development

3.2.1 The Impact of PEOU and PU of Omni-channels on CE and PD

PEOU describes as the extent an individual agrees using certain technology with free of physical and mental effort. PU describes as the extent an individual agrees performance could be improved by using certain technology, and associated with the utility value (Davis, 1989 as cited in Hussein & Hassan, 2017). PEOU and PU are widely used variables of TAM to study the key drivers of customers' acceptance of technology-based innovations in retailing (Herrero-Crespo et al., 2021; Hussein & Hassan, 2017; Juaneda-Ayensa et al.; Natarajan et al., 2017; Silva et al., 2018). Previous research confirmed that PEOU and PU positively impacted the purchase intention to use omni-channel approach during the shopping journey (Herrero-Crespo et al., 2021; Juaneda-Ayensa et al., 2016; Silva et al., 2018 as cited in Peiris et al., 2021; Wulandari and Sauki, 2022). It is predicted that PEOU and PU of omni-channels significantly increase CE and PD in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

H1. Perceived ease of use (PEOU) of omni-channels significantly increases customer engagement (CE) in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

H2. Perceived ease of use (PEOU) of omni-channels significantly increases purchase decision (PD) in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

H3. Perceived usefulness (PU) of omni-channels significantly increases customer engagement (CE) in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

H4. Perceived usefulness (PU) of omni-channels significantly increases purchase decision (PD) in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

3.2.2 The Impact of SI in Omni-channels on CE and PD

SI denotes as the extent that a person is influenced by people who are essential such as family, peer groups, key opinion leaders etc. (Juaneda-Ayensa et al., 2016). The participation and involvement of consumers in online brand communities establishes social interaction, communication and sharing in the customer engagement process (Morgan-Thomas et al., 2020). Sashi (2012) and Siqueira et al. (2019) argued that customers seek information not only from the sources provided by the company but also through peer-to-peer connection in social media network. Customers also act as advocates with product or service endorsement to other customers. This can affect the purchase decision of others through peer-to-peer communication. Since repeated customers are not expected in wedding services business, referral from existing customers, word of mouth and e-WOM effects are crucial propagators. It is predicted that SI in omni-channels significantly increases CE and PD in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

H5. Social influence (SI) in omni-channel significantly increases customer engagement (CE) in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

H6. Social influence (SI) in omni-channel significantly increases purchase decision (PD) in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

3.2.3 The Impact of PE in Omni-channels on CE and PD

PE refers to the extent that customers can experience individualized attention across different channels (Shi et al., 2019). Pappas et al., (2016 as cited in Tyrväinen et al., 2020) highlighted the positive relationship between quality and benefit of personalization and purchase intention. The research result from Shi et al. (2019) revealed that personalization was a crucial factor in the measurement of customer experience in omni-channel strategy. Similarly, research by Salesforce (2020) also highlighted that customer expected high degree of interaction with personalization and customization of products and services. Lim et al. (2022, p. 1) conducted research regarding the implementation of omni-channel strategies from various retail types of "high-end specialty stores, department stores, and hypermarkets". The result concluded that customers from high-end specialty store of Louis Vuitton and Gucci were mostly concerned about the personalized services and experiences during the customer journey. Since both luxury brands and wedding services are customer-centric businesses with high involvement and high level of personalization, it is predicted that PE in omni-channel significantly increases CE and PD in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

H7. Personalization (PE) in omni-channel significantly increases customer engagement (CE) in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

H8. Personalization (PE) in omni-channel significantly increases purchase decision (PD) in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

3.2.4 The Impact of PR in Omni-channels on CE and PD

PR of information privacy refers to the consumers' concerns that their personal information will be improperly used or disclosed by the retailer to third parties and secondary

use without their consent (Li et al., 2019). Kazancoglu & Aydin (2018) indicated the negative relationship between information privacy concerns and purchase intention of using omni-channel shopping platforms. Furthermore, Cheah et al. (2022) showed that consumer trust could be negatively affected by the privacy concerns in omni-channel technologies. Salesforce Research (2020) showed only 27% of the surveyed consumers agreed that they completely understood the usage of their personal information by the firms, while only 29% of the surveyed consumers believed that they could control the use of personal information by firms. It is predicted that PR associated with omni-channel has a significant and negative impact on CE and PD in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

H9. Perceived risk (PR) associated with omni-channel has a significant and negative impact on customer engagement (CE) in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

H10.Perceived risk (PR) associated with omni-channel has a significant and negative impact on purchase decision (PD) in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

3.2.5 The Impact of CE on PD

The positive relationship between superior customer engagement and purchase decision was supported by Hussein & Hassan (2017). Customer satisfaction has a direct impact on customer engagement and customer engagement shows positive significant effect on continuation intention to purchase decision. It is predicted that superior CE has positive effect on PD in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

H11. The superior customer engagement (CE) provided by omni-channel wedding services has a significant and positive impact on purchase decision (PD).

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Setting

This study applies quantitative research method in the form of a survey (Punch, 2016; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). A cross-sectional self-administered anonymous on-line questionnaire was designed to test the eleven hypotheses. The questionnaire consisted of 4 sections – 1) purpose of the survey and the ethical considerations; 2) screening questions and the demographic profile of the participant; 3) omni-channel experience in the purchase process of wedding attire or wedding banquet services in Hong Kong and 4) responses of the psychometric statements regarding omni-channel experience. The English version of the questionnaire was translated into Chinese, the primary language of Hong Kong. Back-translation process was conducted to ensure vocabulary, idiomatic and conceptual equivalence (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016) between the original language and the local language.

4.2 Measurement Scales

Likert scales is a common and reliable technique to measure opinions or attitudes with descriptive and inferential statistical analysis (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Seven points between 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) has been used to measure the psychometric responses of respondents. For creating the psychometric statements, reference to previous literature on psychometric statements with good quality of reliability and validity on the measures have been studied and adapted (Appendix A).

4.3 Measures

By using SmartPLS, this study follows the PLS-SEM systematic procedure for inferential statistical analysis (Hair et al., 2016) (Appendix B). PLS-SEM examines the structured relationship between various constructs by specifying the measurement model of construct measurement and the structural model of hypotheses setting (Yeh et al., 2020). PLS-SEM demonstrates excellent statistical power with high efficiency of coefficient estimation (Hair et al. 2017 as cited in Yeh et al., 2020).

As calculated according to the statistics from the Census and Statistics Department, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the average number of marriages per year in Hong Kong between 2018 and 2023 was 37,666 (Census and Statistics Department, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2024). With reference to the sample size calculation table by Saunders et al. (2019), the sample size of 383 participants is targeted in this quantitative research (confidence level = 95% and margin of error = 5%).

4.4 Data Collection

A cross-sectional self-administered anonymous on-line questionnaire distribution through Pollfish survey research platform was employed as equipment to collect data for this quantitative research. Pollfish survey research platform provides real-time responses from more than 250 million respondents around the world with rigorous data quality checking system to eliminate data fraud (Pollfish.com, 2024). A random sample of targeted respondents who fit the eligibility criteria of this study were selected. Two precise screening questions were set to include the targeted respondents as 1) married male or female and 2) with the purchase experience of wedding attire service and/or wedding banquet service in Hong Kong.

A pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted with 30 respondents in order to ensure the questionnaire was well-designed and clear to understand (Tharenou et al., 2007). The extensive pilot process was valuable for revision of the questions and fine tuning of the questionnaire design layout if necessary. Moreover, it tested the required time to complete the questionnaire and the accessibility of the questionnaire by different devices such as smartphone, tablet and desktop computer. The collected data was imported to statistical software SmartPLS and SPSS. Trial runs were conducted to ensure the execution of the procedures in data analysis processes. With the feedback given by the respondents, some wordings in the questions were refined for better clarity. The result of the pilot test proved the validity of the questionnaire and provided a solid foundation for the data collection and data analysis processes.

Total of 305 valid results were collected that fit the eligibility criteria of this study. This was an adequate sample size for data analysis by PLS-SEM (Barclay et al., 1995 as cited in Hair et al, 2014, as cited in Hair et al, 2016). The data was analysed by SmartPLS and SPSS. The demographics of the respondents are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information by Gender and Age of Marriage for Wedding Attire Service and Wedding Banquet Service

	Wedding Attire (Frequency)	Wedding Attire (%)		Wedding Banquet (Frequency)	Wedding Banquet (%)		Grand Total (Frequency)	Grand Total (%)
Gender Total	**152**			**153**			**305**	
Married Male	78	51.32%		88	57.52%		166	54.43%
Married Female	74	48.68%		65	42.48%		139	45.57%
Age of Marriage Total	**152**			**153**			**305**	
18 - 25	21	13.82%		15	9.80%		36	11.80%
26 - 30	64	42.11%		65	42.48%		129	42.30%
31 - 35	40	26.32%		43	28.11%		83	27.21%
36 - 40	24	15.79%		26	16.99%		50	16.39%
41 or above	3	1.97%		4	2.62%		7	2.30%

Note. Demographic profiles of respondents. Own work.

5. Data Analysis and Results

5.1 Common Method Variance Bias

Since the data collected from the empirical survey were self-reported by using the same medium, it may be considered as a potential source of common method biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003). It could affect the validity and reliability of the measures as well as the interpretation of the relationships between constructs in the hypotheses testing (Aguirre-Urreta & Hu, 2019). The result of Harman's single-factor test indicated that the total variance explained by a single factor was 35.89%, which fell well below the threshold of 50% (Kock, 2021). It demonstrated that the common method bias was unlikely to be a threat in this study.

5.2 Measurement Model Analysis

The reliability and convergent validity were evaluated by Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE) (Table 2) and outer loadings (Appendix C) (Hair et al., 2014). All CA and CR values were greater than 0.70 with the exception CA value of SI (0.67), which was slightly below the recommended threshold value. AVE values were greater than the suggested minimum value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010 as cited in Hussein & Hassan, 2017). The value of outer loadings for all observed indicators were greater than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014; Garson, 2016). The results confirmed that the model met reliability and convergent validity standards.

Discriminant validity was assessed by Cross-Loading Analysis, Fornell-Larcker Criteria (1981 as cited in Truong, 2020) and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) of correlations (Henseler et al., 2015). All values from Cross-Loading Analysis and Fornell-Larcker Criteria were below the threshold values (Appendix D & Appendix E). All the HTMT values were below the threshold value of 0.90 with the exception between PU and PEOU (0.939) (Table 3). Given that the reliability, convergent and discriminant validity were acceptable in this research, this HTMT value did not affect the discriminant validity (Al-Emran et al.,2020; Shamsi et al., 2022 and Wu & Liu, 2022). It was concluded that the discriminant validity was established in

this research.

Table 2. Reliability & Convergent Validity - Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability & Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Customer Engagement	0.710	0.838	0.634
Perceived Ease of Use	0.710	0.838	0.632
Perceived Risk	0.820	0.892	0.734
Perceived Usefulness	0.741	0.853	0.659
Personalization	0.712	0.839	0.635
Purchase Decision	0.759	0.861	0.674
Social Influence	0.670	0.818	0.599

Note. Analysis of reliability & convergent validity - Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability & Average Variance Extracted (AVE) by SmartPLS. Own work.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity – Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Customer Engagement	Perceived Ease of Use	Perceived Risk	Perceived Usefulness	Personalization	Purchase Decision	Social Influence
Customer Engagement							
Perceived Ease of Use	0.684						
Perceived Risk	0.482	0.345					
Perceived Usefulness	0.722	0.939	0.408				
Personalization	0.784	0.706	0.418	0.806			
Purchase Decision	0.747	0.851	0.428	0.852	0.779		
Social Influence	0.578	0.630	0.559	0.621	0.584	0.592	

Note. Analysis of discriminant validity – Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) by SmartPLS. Own work.

5.3 Structural Model Analysis

5.3.1 Path Coefficient and Hypotheses Testing

Path coefficient represents the hypothesized relationship among the constructs. It examines the relationships between the independent variables and dependent variables (constructs) (Hair et al., 2016). Complete bootstrapping with 5,000 bootstrap samples was set (Garson, 2016). All t-values which are greater than 1.96 are significant at the 0.05 significance level. The hypotheses testing results (Table 4) showed that in the total of eleven hypotheses, seven hypotheses were supported (H1, H2, H3, H4, H7, H8 and H11) and four hypotheses were not supported (H5, H6, H9 and H10).

Table 4. Path Coefficient

Hypotheses		Path Coefficient	*t* statistics	*p* values	Conclusion
H1	Perceived Ease of Use -> Customer Engagement	0.151	2.028	0.043*	Supported
H2	Perceived Ease of Use -> Purchase Decision	0.268	3.489	0.000***	Supported
H3	Perceived Usefulness -> Customer Engagement	0.161	1.973	0.049*	Supported
H4	Perceived Usefulness -> Purchase Decision	0.229	2.912	0.004**	Supported
H5	Social Influence -> Customer Engagement	0.081	1.399	0.162	Not Supported
H6	Social Influence -> Purchase Decision	0.044	0.673	0.501	Not Supported
H7	Personalization -> Customer Engagement	0.304	4.155	0.000***	Supported
H8	Personalization -> Purchase Decision	0.180	2.670	0.008**	Supported
H9	Perceived Risk -> Customer Engagement	0.145	2.091	0.037*	Not Supported
H10	Perceived Risk -> Purchase Decision	0.062	1.020	0.308	Not Supported
H11	Customer Engagement -> Purchase Decision	0.162	2.500	0.012*	Supported

*Significant at *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001*

Note. Results of path coefficients by SmartPLS. Own work.

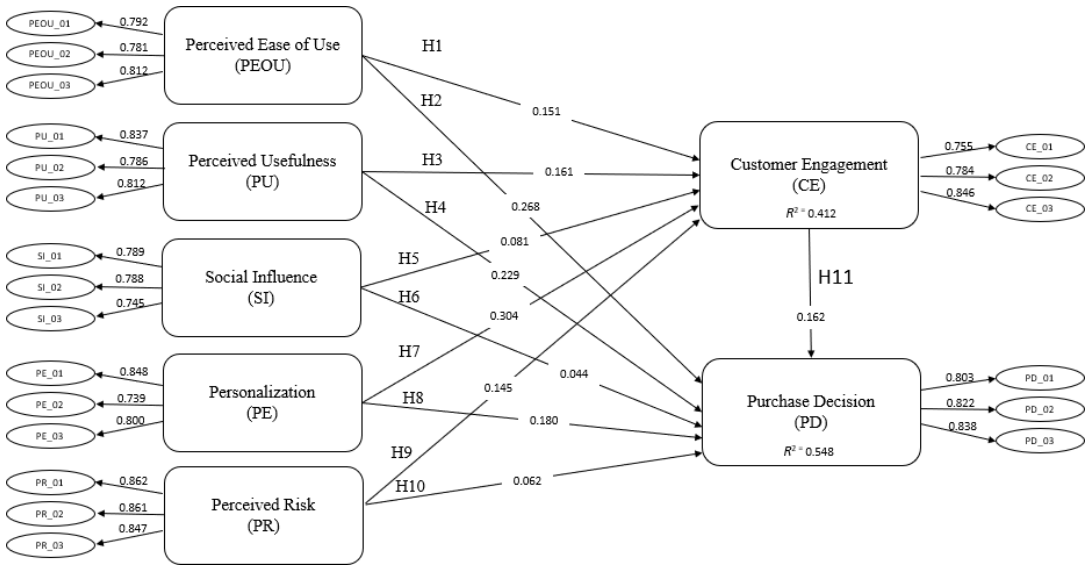
The structural model indicated that PEOU has a statistically significant and positive impact on CE and PD (coefficient of 0.151 (p = .043) and 0.268 (p < .001)) respectively. The results also supported that PU has a statistically significant and positive impact on CE and PD (coefficient of 0.161 (p = .049) and 0.229 (p = .004)) respectively. Furthermore, the results showed that PE has a significant and strong positive impact on CE and PD (coefficient of 0.304 (p < .001) and 0.180 (p = .008)) respectively. Significant positive impact was found between CE and PD (coefficient of 0.162 (p = .012)). Therefore, H1, H2, H3, H4, H7, H8 and H11 were supported.

However, the result showed that SI has statistically insignificant and negligible impact on CE and PD (coefficient of 0.081 (p = .162) and 0.044 (p = .501)) respectively. Besides, the results indicated no negative relationship between PR towards CE and PD (coefficient of 0.145 (p = .037) and 0.062 (p = .308)) respectively. Although the p value of hypothesis H9 between PR and CE was < .05, the path coefficient of 0.145 did not represent a negative impact (Hair et al., 2016). Therefore, H5, H6, H9 and H10 were not supported.

5.3.2 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Coefficient of determination (R^2) is an estimate of common variance to measure the predictive accuracy of the research model (Spatz, 2011). As shown in PLS-SEM Research Model (Figure 3), the R^2 value of CE (R^2 = 0.412, p < .001) and PD (R^2 = 0.548, p < .001) indicated that 41.2% of the variability of customer engagement and 54.8% of the variability of purchase decision can be explained by the research model respectively. Both demonstrated moderate level of predictive accuracy of the research model (Hair et al., 2011 as cited in Hair et al., 2014).

Figure 3. PLS-SEM Research Model



Note. PLS-SEM research model by SmartPLS. Own work.

6. Discussion

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This original research model demonstrates significant impact of omni-channel strategy in optimizing customer engagement and purchase decision in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. The R^2 value of customer engagement (0.412) and purchase decision (0.548) both represent moderate level of predictive accuracy of the research model. The results show that PEOU, PU and PE are the key drivers of customers' acceptance of omni-channel strategy in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. PE is the strongest predictor (p < .001) followed by PEOU (p = .043) and PU (p = .049) that can significantly increase customer engagement in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. In the similar vein, PEOU is the strongest predictor (p < .001) followed by PU (p = .004) and PE (p = .008) that can significantly increase purchase decision in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. Furthermore, the research result also gives insight into the positive impact of superior customer engagement in the omni-channel context on purchase decision (p = .012) in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

The results align with existing literatures in showing positive relationships between PEOU and PU to purchase decision (Herrero-Crespo et al., 2021; Juaneda-Ayensa et al., 2016;

Silva et al., 2018 as cited in Peiris et al., 2021; Wulandari and Sauki, 2022). The findings are coherent with Pappas et al., (2016 as cited in Tyrväinen et al., 2020) and Salesforce Research (2020) in showing the positive relationship between quality and benefit of personalization and purchase intention. Customers expect a high level of interaction with personalization and customization of products and services to meet their individual needs. The research corroborates the works of Çakiroğlu & Çengel (2020) and Tyrväinen et al. (2020). By leveraging the customer information gathered through the integration of online and offline channels, firms should provide personalized customer experience with the suitable products or services at the optimal time through right channels.

However, the result indicates that social influence cannot be identified as a significant underlying driver of customers' acceptance of omni-channel strategy in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. The results show that social influence plays a negligible role in increasing customer engagement and purchase decision in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. The findings align with previous research from Juaneda-Ayensa et al. (2016) and Wulandari and Sauki (2022) that social influence did not affect omni-channel purchase intention.

The result provides no statistical evidence in support of a significant negative relationship between perceived risk and customer engagement. Besides, perceived risk has a negligible impact on purchase decision in the wedding service sector in Hong Kong. As a result, perceived risk of information privacy cannot be identified as an underlying inhibitor for the customers' acceptance of omni-channel strategy in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the findings are different from previous studies that Kazancoglu & Aydin (2018) and Salesforce Research (2020) indicated the negative relationship between information privacy concern and purchase intention of using omni-channel shopping platform.

6.2 Managerial Implications

The research findings were supported by several validation interviews with senior management of the wedding services sector in Hong Kong with the following managerial implications.

Firstly, the results provide insights to business practitioners about the key drivers and inhibitors of customers' acceptance of omni-channel strategy in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. Firms should emphasize on the factors of convenience, usefulness and personalization among the omni-channel constellation during the implementation of omni-channel strategy. Different channels provided by the firms should be easy to use, navigate and communicate with the customers. Moreover, all channels should provide consistent and useful information for customers to select suitable wedding services. Firms should clearly identify the target segmentation by leveraging the customer information gathered through the integration of online, offline, mobile and social channels. Product or service recommendations, discounts or privileges offers as well as customer services delivered by firms should be based on the personal preferences of different customers. The balance between personalization and perceived risk of information privacy in the omni-channel context should also be taken into consideration in developing omni-channel strategies (Thaichon et al., 2023).

Secondly, this research provides valuable practical insights about the implementation of omni-channel strategy. Omni-channel strategy is a customer-centric retail strategy with the aims to maximize customer experience and interaction throughout the customer journey by the synergy and seamless integration of different online and offline channels (Hsia et al., 2020;

Lu, 2017; Melero et al., 2016; Serrano, 2019; Sun et al., 2020; Ye et al., 2018). Customer rather than corporate functional silos is the core of the strategy (Gerea et al., 2021; Paccard, 2021). Management should consider the implementation of omni-channel strategy not only as marketing strategy but also business transformation to break the functional silos in the company. The successful integrations among different functions should be considered as a key success factor for the implementation of omni-channel strategy.

Finally, management should understand that online and offline channels fulfill complementary roles rather than being competing substitutes. The allocation of resources and budgets should not only concentrate on any single channel but the whole omni-channel constellation. Firms should consider how to market and offer services to targeted customers through the synergy effects of different traditional brick-and-mortar stores, online channels, mobile channels and social media channels as well as personal connections.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Firstly, there are a wide variety of variable choices from different theories of understanding consumer's acceptance of technology-based innovations in retailing. This study aims to concentrate on the variable choices which are applicable in the wedding services omni-channel context. Future studies could consider extending the complex relationships with other variable choices to further explore the user acceptance factors towards new technologies on theoretical level.

Secondly, the data collection process of this study was cross-sectional time horizon in nature that only provides a snapshot of omni-channel strategy practices in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. The results provide generalized findings and insights to other service-based industries. Future longitudinal research should extend to different service-based industries such as hospitality industry and travelling industry.

Finally, this research emphasizes on the case study of the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. Future study should provide cross-cultural analysis with different geographical locations in Asia Pacific such as China, Japan and South Korea to identify whether cross-cultural differences can influence the implementation of omni-channel strategy in wedding services sector.

7. Conclusion

With the generalizable empirical results, this study produces several contributions to the extant knowledges in the field of omni-channel service-based retailing.

Firstly, with the best understanding by the author through extensive literature review, this research acts as pioneer to explore omni-channel strategy in optimizing customer engagement and purchase decision with the case of the wedding services businesses in Hong Kong. This research enriches the current literature on omni-channel retailing in service-based industries.

Secondly, this research enriches the understanding of the applicability of the TAM, UTAUT and UTAUT2 models in omni-channel retailing. This research demonstrates that TAM, UTAUT and UTAUT2 are robust and reliable models to understand the customer's attitudes and behaviours in the omni-channel context.

Finally, the results provide new insights that perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness

and personalization are the key drivers of customers' acceptance of omni-channel strategy. Personalization is the strongest predictor that can significantly increase customer engagement while perceived ease of use is the strongest predictor that can significantly increase purchase decision. Besides, the finding also gives a vast insight that the superior customer engagement has positive effect on purchase decision in the wedding services sector in Hong Kong. To conclude, this research study provides significant contributions in unveiling the effectiveness of omni-channel strategy in optimizing customer engagement and purchase decision in the retail setting of the wedding services sector in Hong Kong.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Psychometric Statement

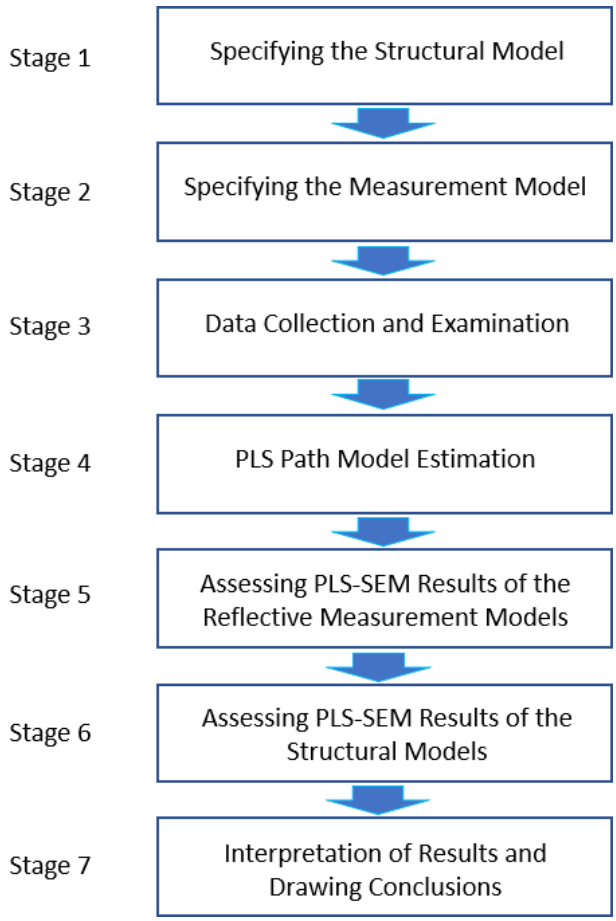
Construct	Psychometric Statement	References
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	PEOU_01 I was able to easily find wedding banquet/attire service information provided by this company.	Gao et al. (2011)
	PEOU_02 I was able to navigate easily among different channels provided by this company.	Gao et al. (2011)
	PEOU_03 I was able to communicate easily with this company over the channels provided.	Gao et al. (2011); Hussein & Hassan (2017)
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	PU_01 I found the wedding banquet/attire service information provided by this company to be useful.	Herrero-Crespo et al. (2021); Juaneda-Ayensa et al. (2016)
	PU_02 The channels provided by this company were useful for me to select suitable wedding banquet/attire service.	Herrero-Crespo et al. (2021); Juaneda-Ayensa et al. (2016)
	PU_03 The channels provided by this company made my life easier in the wedding planning process.	Juaneda-Ayensa et al. (2016)
Social Influence (SI)	SI_01 I actively sought advice and reviews before my selection towards the purchase of wedding banquet/attire service from this company.	Lu (2017)
	SI_02 I observed where my friends were purchasing wedding banquet/attire service before my selection of this company.	Lu (2017)
	SI_03 The opinion and recommendation given by people who had the same experience before affected my selection of this company.	Lu (2017)

Personalization (PE)	PE_01 Product or service recommendations offered by this company corresponded to my personal preference.	Hsia et al. (2020); Shi et al. (2019)
	PE_02 Discounts and privileges offered by this company corresponded to my personal preference.	Hsia et al. (2020); Shi et al. (2019)
	PE_03 This company offered personalized customer service corresponded to my personal preference.	Hsia et al. (2020); Tyrväinen et al. (2020)
Perceived Risk (PR)	PR_01 I was concerned that this company might collect too much information about me.	Li et al. (2019); Pagani et al. (2019)
	PR_02 I was concerned that different channels might know or track my behaviors and activities when interacting with this company.	Li et al. (2019); Pagani et al. (2019); Quach et al. (2020)
	PR_03 I was concerned that my personal data collected from this company might be used for other purposes.	Li et al. (2019); Pagani et al. (2019); Quach et al. (2020)
Customer Engagement (CE)	CE_01 I focused attention on the marketing promotions of this company through different channels.	Kosiba et al. (2018); Kritzinger & Petzer (2020); Luo et al. (2019)
	CE_02 I was active in interaction with this company through different channels.	Kosiba et al. (2018); Kritzinger & Petzer (2020); Luo et al. (2019)
	CE_03 I felt good about the experience of interaction with this company through different channels.	Kosiba et al. (2018); Kritzinger & Petzer (2020); Luo et al. (2019)

Purchase Decision (PD)	PD_01 I felt good about my purchase of wedding banquet/attire service from this company.	Hanaysha (2017)
	PD_02 I would recommend people around me to purchase wedding banquet/attire service from this company.	Hanaysha (2017); Hussein & Hassan (2017); Prasad et al. (2019); Shi et al. (2019); Truong (2020)
	PD_03 Overall, I was satisfied about my decision to purchase wedding banquet/attire service from this company.	Hanaysha (2017)

Note. Psychometric statement with references. Own work.

Appendix B. PLS-SEM Systematic Procedure



Note. PLS-SEM Systematic Procedure. From *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural*

Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) (p. 30), by J. Hair, T. G. M. Hult, C. M. Ringle, & M. Sarstedt, 2016, SAGE Publications, Inc.

Appendix C. Convergent Validity – Outer Loadings

	Customer Engagement	Perceived Ease of Use	Perceived Risk	Perceived Usefulness	Personalization	Purchase Decision	Social Influence
CE_01	0.755						
CE_02	0.784						
CE_03	0.846						
PD_01						0.803	
PD_02						0.822	
PD_03						0.838	
PEOU_01		0.792					
PEOU_02		0.781					
PEOU_03		0.812					
PE_01					0.848		
PE_02					0.739		
PE_03					0.800		
PR_01			0.862				
PR_02			0.861				
PR_03			0.847				
PU_01				0.837			
PU_02				0.786			
PU_03				0.812			
SI_01							0.789
SI_02							0.788
SI_03							0.745

Note. Analysis of convergent validity – Outer Loadings by SmartPLS. Own work.

Appendix D. Discriminant Validity – Cross-Loading Analysis

	Customer Engagement	Perceived Ease of Use	Perceived Risk	Perceived Usefulness	Personalization	Purchase Decision	Social Influence
CE_01	**0.755**	0.335	0.408	0.381	0.474	0.385	0.310
CE_02	**0.784**	0.412	0.253	0.408	0.415	0.393	0.279
CE_03	**0.846**	0.417	0.224	0.461	0.436	0.530	0.370
PD_01	0.466	0.450	0.275	0.475	0.484	**0.803**	0.399
PD_02	0.468	0.537	0.309	0.546	0.464	**0.822**	0.306
PD_03	0.429	0.557	0.256	0.555	0.474	**0.838**	0.356
PEOU_01	0.342	**0.792**	0.143	0.535	0.374	0.475	0.397
PEOU_02	0.415	**0.781**	0.237	0.563	0.441	0.471	0.316
PEOU_03	0.403	**0.812**	0.251	0.525	0.384	0.549	0.344
PE_01	0.450	0.375	0.241	0.478	**0.848**	0.470	0.331
PE_02	0.454	0.376	0.295	0.384	**0.739**	0.366	0.298
PE_03	0.425	0.447	0.233	0.537	**0.800**	0.531	0.346
PR_01	0.286	0.288	**0.862**	0.314	0.296	0.279	0.345
PR_02	0.348	0.235	**0.861**	0.269	0.296	0.331	0.353
PR_03	0.301	0.162	**0.847**	0.232	0.222	0.259	0.372
PU_01	0.429	0.534	0.225	**0.837**	0.486	0.551	0.345
PU_02	0.425	0.542	0.296	**0.786**	0.459	0.493	0.393
PU_03	0.425	0.582	0.252	**0.812**	0.491	0.516	0.349
SI_01	0.329	0.394	0.329	0.408	0.346	0.404	**0.789**
SI_02	0.330	0.394	0.346	0.345	0.340	0.302	**0.788**
SI_03	0.275	0.259	0.289	0.263	0.253	0.273	**0.745**

Note. Analysis of discriminant validity – Cross-loading Analysis by SmartPLS. Own work.

Appendix E. Discriminant Validity – Fornell-Larcker Criteria

	Customer Engagement	Perceived Ease of Use	Perceived Risk	Perceived Usefulness	Personalization	Purchase Decision	Social Influence
Customer Engagement	0.796						
Perceived Ease of Use	0.488	0.795					
Perceived Risk	0.367	0.267	0.857				
Perceived Usefulness	0.525	0.680	0.317	0.812			
Personalization	0.554	0.502	0.319	0.590	0.797		
Purchase Decision	0.553	0.629	0.341	0.641	0.577	0.821	
Social Influence	0.404	0.441	0.416	0.445	0.409	0.429	0.774

Note. Analysis of discriminant validity – Fornell-Larcker Criteria by SmartPLS. Own work.