

# What Links Retail to Modernity? The Future of Retail - Romanian Case Study

## A combined Analysis of Consumer Perceptions and AI Insights

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the link between retail and modernity and bring as case study the Romanian perception of the future of the store. The research combines insights from secondary data consumer perception study with the potential applications of AI research. We explore convergences and divergences between AI-generated perspectives and actual consumer beliefs and expectations, focusing on technology integration, sustainability, and experiential retail. While both AI and the the consumer perception study highlight the importance of technology, the research reveals specific consumer concerns like affordability and cultural nuances that AI might not fully capture.*

*The combined analysis offers valuable insights into Romanian consumer preferences and identifies potential future trends in the retail landscape. By acknowledging limitations like the scope of AI analysis and data source restrictions, we emphasize the need for further research integrating AI with diverse research methods for a comprehensive understanding of the future of retail in Romania.*

*Keywords: retail, AI, consumer perception, Romania*

*JEL classification: L81, O30, M31*

DOI: 10.24818/REJ/2024/87/07

### **1. Introduction**

The advent of modernity has indelibly transformed the landscape of retail, intertwining it with the profound social, economic, and technological shifts that have reshaped our world. This era, characterized by rapid urbanization, industrialization, and globalization, has given birth to a burgeoning consumer culture that has redefined the way goods are produced, distributed, and consumed.

At the heart of this transformation lies the inextricable link between retail and the forces of modernity. The growth of urban centers and the rise of an increasingly affluent middle class have fueled an insatiable demand for consumer goods, propelling the proliferation of retail establishments and innovative retail formats. Concurrently, technological advancements in transportation, communication, and manufacturing have facilitated the mass production and distribution of goods,

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enabling retailers to cater to a global consumer base while offering a diverse array of products at unprecedented scales.

Moreover, modernity has ushered in profound shifts in consumer behavior and values, with individuals embracing a heightened sense of individualism, self-expression, and leisure. Retailers have deftly adapted to these evolving preferences, curating shopping experiences that cater to consumers' aspirations and identities through branding, advertising, and the creation of immersive retail environments.

Paralleling these developments, the retail industry has undergone a metamorphosis of its own, giving rise to novel business models and retail formats that have disrupted traditional paradigms.

E-commerce, omnichannel retailing, and experiential retail have emerged as potent forces, reshaping the way consumers engage with brands and make purchasing decisions.

Against this backdrop, it is imperative to explore the multifaceted relationship between retail and modernity, examining the intricate interplay between social, cultural, economic, and technological factors that have shaped the contemporary retail landscape. By delving into this intricate nexus, we can gain valuable insights into the driving forces behind consumer behavior, the evolution of retail practices, and the broader societal implications of this dynamic interplay.

This introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive exploration of the retail aspects of modernity, highlighting the profound transformations that have taken place and positioning the retail industry as a microcosm of the broader societal changes that define the modern era.

## **2. Significance and relevance**

Retail, the act of selling goods to consumers, has been an integral part of human history. However, the modern retail landscape, characterized by large-scale chains, diverse shopping experiences, and online marketplaces, is a product of the complex interplay between economic, social, and technological forces over the past few centuries (Eisenstadt, 2000).

Studying the intersection of retail and modernity is essential for several reasons as follows.

### **Understanding consumer behavior**

By examining historical and contemporary trends in retail, we gain valuable insights into how consumers interact with products, make purchasing decisions, and respond to marketing strategies. This knowledge is crucial for businesses to navigate

the ever-changing retail landscape and develop effective customer engagement strategies (McAlexander et al., 2002).

### **Analyzing economic trends**

Retail acts as a barometer of the economic health of a society. Studying changes in retail patterns, consumer spending habits, and market dynamics can provide valuable information for policymakers, economists, and financial institutions to understand economic growth, inflation, and societal well-being (Grewal et al., 2004).

### **Unveiling cultural influences**

Retail practices and trends reflect the cultural values and aspirations of a society. Studying the evolution of retail can offer insights into how societal norms, gender roles, and concepts of self-expression are shaped and reflected in consumer behavior (Campbell, 1987).

## **2.1 Research objectives and questions**

This research aims to delve into the multifaceted relationship between retail and modernity, focusing on the following objectives:

### ***2.1.1 Unveiling the links in terms of historical context, cultural significance and interdependence***

Examine the historical evolution of retail practices, analyzing how socio-economic changes and technological advancements led to the emergence of the modern retail landscape (Eisenstadt, 2000).

Explore the role of retail in shaping societal values, consumer aspirations, and cultural trends. How does retail reflect and influence broader cultural dynamics? (Miller, 1995)

Identify the key aspects that link retail and modernity. How do these interconnected forces influence each other? (Latour, 2005).

### ***2.1.2 Adaptability and customer expectations***

Analyze how the retail landscape has continuously adapted to meet changing customer expectations over time. What driving forces have led to these adaptations? (Vargo & Lusch, 2004)

Examine the contemporary challenges faced by the retail industry, including the rise of e-commerce, evolving demographics, and changing consumer values.

Based on the understanding of historical trends and contemporary challenges, explore potential future adaptations and transformations in the retail landscape to cater to evolving customer expectations (Winner, 1986).

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

This research will utilize a multi-disciplinary theoretical framework to investigate the relationship between retail and modernity. Here are the key perspectives that will inform the analysis:

### **Modernization theory**

Examines the historical shift from traditional societies towards more industrialized and urbanized structures, analyzing how changing social and economic factors impacted consumption patterns and the emergence of modern retail (Eisenstadt, 2000).

### **Consumer culture theory**

Focuses on the cultural significance of consumption and explores how individuals use consumer goods and shopping experiences to construct their identities (Miller, 1995).

### **Service-Dominant Logic (SDL)**

Emphasizes the role of value creation and co-creation, highlighting how both customers and retailers contribute to value through their interactions (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

### **Actor-Network Theory (ANT)**

Analyzes the interconnectedness of various actors within a network of exchange, including individuals, organizations, and technologies, to understand how they shape market dynamics (Latour, 2005).

### **Technological determinism**

Recognizes the transformative potential of technology, exploring how advancements like e-commerce have reshaped the retail landscape and influenced customer behavior (Winner, 1986).

By employing this multifaceted theoretical framework, the research will go beyond a singular perspective, allowing for a richer and more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between retail and modernity.

### 3. Literature review

Modern retailing is a constantly evolving ecosystem characterized by shifting consumer expectations, rapid technological advancements and unforeseen global disruptions.

Big retailers, to maintain their position, must continuously adapt and innovate to meet these challenges and exceed customer expectations.

#### **Evolving consumer behavior**

The rise of e-commerce and omnichannel shopping has fundamentally reshaped the retail landscape, empowering consumers and placing new demands on retailers.

The rise of e-commerce and omnichannel shopping has empowered consumers with more choices and information, demanding a seamless and personalized experience across all touchpoints (Verhoef et al., 2007; Kumar et al., 2018).

E-commerce platforms offer a vast array of products from global vendors, while online reviews, product comparisons, and social media recommendations provide consumers with unprecedented access to information. This empowers them to make informed decisions and compare prices across different retailers (Grewal et al., 2004; Hui & Zhou, 2007).

E-commerce offers greater efficiency by allowing consumers to search for products quickly and compare prices easily, contributing to their empowerment (McKittrick, 1995) and facilitates access to a global marketplace, expanding consumer choices beyond regional limitations (Dunning, 1993).

Consumers expect a consistent experience across all touchpoints, whether they're browsing online, shopping in-store, or using a mobile app (Kumar et al., 2018). This requires seamless integration between online and offline channels, allowing for activities like online purchases with in-store pickup or product returns.

Technology allows retailers to personalize the shopping experience by tailoring product recommendations, marketing messages, and loyalty programs based on individual customer preferences and purchase history (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). This creates a sense of connection and value for the consumer.

The research of Verhoef, Kannan and Bharadwaj (2007) introduces the concept of customer experience management in retail, highlighting the importance of creating a positive and consistent experience across all touchpoints.

Contribution to a more tailored customer experience we find explored through the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and big data in personalizing marketing and recommendations (Brynjolfsson et al., 2017).

The retail industry is no longer a one-size-fits-all environment. A combination of demographic shifts and evolving societal values is forcing retailers to acknowledge and cater to a more diverse customer base.

Shifting demographics and changing societal values necessitate retailers to cater to diverse customer needs and preferences, including those related to sustainability and ethical sourcing (Jones et al., 2014; Ladge et al., 2020).

Life expectancy is increasing globally, leading to a growing segment of older consumers with specific needs and preferences. Retailers may need to adapt product offerings to cater to senior citizens, for example, by providing larger print labels, easier-to-open packaging, or products designed for mobility limitations (Vignali et al., 2018).

Many countries are experiencing significant immigration, resulting in a more ethnically diverse population. This creates a demand for products and services that cater to different cultural backgrounds and dietary needs (Ladge et al., 2020).

As demographics diversify, retailers need to offer products that resonate with the evolving self-perceptions of their customer base (Campbell, 1987).

Environmental consciousness is rising, leading to consumer demand for products made with sustainable materials, produced with ethical practices, and with minimal environmental impact (Brynjolfsson et al., 2017). Retailers need to demonstrate transparency in their supply chains and highlight their commitment to sustainability initiatives.

Consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about labor practices within the production chain. Issues like fair wages, safe working conditions, and avoiding child labor are now critical considerations for many shoppers (Belk, 2014). Retailers need to establish ethical sourcing practices and communicate them effectively to gain consumer trust.

Retailers can build a positive brand experience by associating themselves with ethical and sustainable practices (Holt, 2018).

### **Technological advancements**

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and big data analytics is revolutionizing retail operations. This powerful combination allows retailers to gain deeper insights into customer behavior, optimize logistics, and personalize the shopping experience in ways never before possible.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and big data analytics are transforming retail operations through personalized recommendations, optimized logistics, and enhanced customer experiences (Brynjolfsson et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2020).

AI algorithms can analyze vast amounts of customer data, including purchase history, browsing behavior, demographics, and social media interactions. This analysis enables retailers to recommend products that are highly relevant to individual customer preferences (Brynjolfsson et al., 2017). This personalization fosters customer satisfaction and loyalty by presenting them with products they are more likely to be interested in.

AI-powered recommendations are a powerful tool for building customer relationships through personalized marketing strategies (McAlexander et al., 2002).

Personalized recommendations contribute to a more positive customer experience, ultimately leading to higher customer lifetime value (Lee și Whang, 2009).

Big data analytics can be used to optimize logistics by analyzing historical sales data, weather patterns, and real-time inventory levels. This allows retailers to predict demand more accurately, optimize stock levels at different locations, and ensure efficient delivery routes (Chen et al., 2020). This data-driven approach reduces operational costs and improves product availability for customers.

The work of Mentzer et al. (2001) defines supply chain management and emphasizes its importance in optimizing business operations. AI and big data analytics are key tools for modern supply chain management in retail. AI and big data also enhance traditional logistics practices by enabling more efficient and data-driven decision-making (Stock et al., 2013).

AI chatbots can provide 24/7 customer support, answer product-related questions, and help with order tracking. This enhances customer convenience and allows retailers to offer personalized assistance at scale (Huang et al., 2020).

AI-powered product recommendations integrated into websites and mobile apps not only personalize the shopping experience but also allow for dynamic pricing strategies based on real-time demand and customer behavior.

The retail landscape is no longer confined to physical stores and online platforms. Emerging technologies like Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are revolutionizing the way consumers interact with products and experience shopping.

The emergence of new technologies like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) presents opportunities for innovative in-store experiences and product demonstrations (Pantano et al., 2019).

AR allows customers to virtually "place" products in their homes or environments before purchase. Imagine visualizing furniture pieces in your living space to see scale and style compatibility, or trying on makeup virtually to find the perfect shade (Pantano et al., 2019). This eliminates guesswork and fosters informed purchase decisions.

AR product visualization can create a more engaging and interactive store environment, leading to increased customer satisfaction and purchase likelihood, according to Wohlfahrt et al., (2020) research which explores the impact of AR on store atmospherics and purchasing behavior.

VR allows customers to step into virtual showrooms and experience products in a simulated environment. Imagine virtually test-driving a car, exploring a new vacation destination, or even attending a virtual fashion show (Pantano et al., 2019). This creates a highly engaging and memorable shopping experience that transcends physical limitations.

VR's immersive product experiences can create a stronger sense of transportation to the product environment, leading to increased interest and potential purchase (Huang et al., 2019).

VR product experiences allow for interactive exploration and deeper product understanding, ultimately influencing purchase decisions (Liu et al., 2023).

While AR and VR offer exciting possibilities, some challenges remain. These technologies require hardware investments and content creation, which can be expensive. Additionally, user adoption and ensuring a seamless in-store integration are crucial aspects to consider. Nevertheless, the potential benefits are undeniable.

### **Global disruptions**

Food crises and medical crises can significantly impact supply chains, disrupt operations, and influence consumer buying behavior (Chen et al., 2020; Ritchie & Venturini, 2023).

Events like pandemics or natural disasters can necessitate rapid adaptation in terms of product availability, pricing strategies, and communication with customers (McKinsey & Company, 2020).

### **Building customer loyalty**

Personalization and customer engagement strategies foster deeper connections with customers and drive loyalty (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Brodie et al., 2018).

Omnichannel integration ensures a consistent and positive customer experience across all channels (Verhoef et al., 2007).

### **Embracing innovation**

Investing in cutting-edge technologies like AI and big data allows retailers to gain valuable insights into customer behavior and optimize operations (Brynjolfsson et al., 2017; Lee & Whang, 2009).

Experimenting with new technologies like AR and VR can enhance the in-store experience and attract tech-savvy consumers (Pantano et al., 2019).

### **Building resilience**

Robust supply chain management practices mitigate the impact of disruptions like food crises and ensure product availability (Stock et al., 2013).

Agile business models and flexible decision-making enable retailers to adapt to unforeseen circumstances and changing market conditions (McKinsey & Company, 2020).

The modern retail environment is not immune to unforeseen disruptions that can significantly impact operations and customer behavior. Here's a deeper look at some key global disruptions and their implications for retailers:

#### **Food Crises**

- Supply Chain Disruptions

Events like natural disasters, political unrest, or trade wars can disrupt global food production and distribution networks. This can lead to shortages of essential goods, price fluctuations, and increased volatility in the supply chain (Chen et al., 2020).

The supply chain resilience is crucial for navigating disruptions like food crises. Retailers need to build robust supply chains with diversified sourcing and contingency plans to mitigate risks (Christopher and Holgate, 2011).

Understanding the various challenges to global food security, including climate change and resource scarcity, allows retailers to anticipate potential food crises and adjust their strategies accordingly (Faff, 2023).

#### **Medical Crises**

- Pandemic Outbreaks

Global pandemics like COVID-19 can disrupt consumer behavior, leading to increased demand for essential goods and changes in purchasing habits. Additionally, lockdowns and travel restrictions can disrupt production and logistics, impacting product availability (Ritchie & Venturini, 2023).

The resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic emphasizes the importance of adapting operations and decision-making processes to navigate unforeseen circumstances (Sheffi, 2020).

#### 4. Methodology

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative aspects to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between retail and modernity in the Romanian context.

##### 4.1 AI Perspective, qualitative analysis

Data collection: textual data, generating the 30 most relevant words linking retail and modernity using three large language models (LLMs): Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini.

Data interpretation: based on each AI app experience, Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini. Each app was asked to give its own interpretation and comments.

These LLMs will be prompted with the same question to ensure consistency in the data collection process.

**Table 1. „30 most relevant words that link retail to modernity”**

No.	Claude (Anthropic)	Chat GPT (Open AI)	Gemini (Google)
1	Consumer	E-commerce	E-commerce
2	Mass production	Digitalization	Online shopping
3	Industrialization	Omnichannel	Mobile payments
4	Urbanization	Personalization	Artificial intelligence
5	Globalization	Augmented Reality	Big data
6	Technology	Mobile Payments	Omnichannel
7	Digital	IoT (Internet of Things)	Personalization
8	E-commerce	Big Data Analytics	Customization
9	Branding	Artificial Intelligence	Customer engagement
10	Advertising	Blockchain	Storytelling
11	Consumerism	Virtual Reality	Convenience
12	Department stores	Contactless	Sustainability
13	Shopping malls	Subscription	Globalization
14	Individualism	Cloud Computing	Supply chain
15	Self-expression	Click-and-Collect	Logistics

No.	Claude (Anthropic)	Chat GBT (Open AI)	Gemini (Google)
16	Leisure	RFID (Radio Frequency Identification)	Disruption
17	New formats	Smart Devices	Innovation
18	International trade	Automation	Market trends
19	Supply chains	Cybersecurity	Consumption
20	Omnichannel	Data-driven	Accessibility
21	Experiential	Seamless	Diversity
22	Cultural shifts	Sustainability	Ethics
23	Behavior changes	On-demand	Transparency
24	Innovations	Voice Commerce	Community
25	Disruptions	Drones	Efficiency
26	Transformations	3D Printing	Convenience
27	Evolutions	Instant Gratification	Choice
28	Adaptations	Hyperlocal	Value
29	Integrations	Geotargeting	Experience
30	Interconnectivity	Social Commerce	Sustainability

*Source:* own research

This analysis examines the 30 words generated by three large language models (LLMs) - Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini - to identify the key themes linking retail and modernity.

### **Key Themes:**

Technology, Consumer experience, Shifting landscape, Sustainability and ethics

All three LLMs highlight the pervasive influence of technology in modern retail, including e-commerce, digitalization, mobile payments, big data, artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and the Internet of Things (IoT). These technologies are transforming how consumers shop, interact with brands, and experience retail environments.

The LLMs emphasize the importance of a positive consumer experience in modern retail. Words like personalization, customization, convenience, seamlessness, and accessibility reflect the focus on catering to individual needs and preferences.

The terms omnichannel, globalization, new formats, and disruptions indicate the dynamic and constantly evolving nature of the retail industry, driven by globalization, changing consumer behavior, and emerging technologies.

Notably, all three LLMs included "sustainability" in their lists, highlighting the growing importance of ethical and environmentally conscious practices in modern retail. This reflects changing consumer values and a growing demand for responsible business practices.

Each app revealed the words from different perspectives as follows.

The 30 words selected by **Claude** to link retail and modernity represent the multifaceted and dynamic interplay between the evolution of the retail industry and the broader socio-economic, cultural, and technological forces that have shaped the modern era. These words encapsulate the profound transformations that have reshaped the retail landscape, reflecting the intricate connections between consumer behavior, production and distribution systems, marketing strategies, and the ever-changing societal norms and values that have emerged throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

The words "consumer," "consumerism," and "leisure" capture the rise of a consumer-centric culture, fueled by increasing disposable incomes, shorter work weeks, and a shift towards prioritizing individual self-expression and pleasure. These cultural shifts have profoundly influenced retail practices, driving the need for retailers to cater to evolving consumer preferences and aspirations.

Words like "mass production," "industrialization," and "urbanization" highlight the economic and demographic transformations that laid the foundation for modern retail. The Industrial Revolution and the growth of urban centers created both the supply and demand for mass-produced consumer goods, leading to the emergence of innovative retail formats such as department stores and shopping malls.

The words "technology," "digital," "e-commerce," and "omnichannel" reflect the profound impact of technological advancements on the retail industry. The digital age has revolutionized the way consumers interact with brands, shop, and make purchasing decisions, challenging traditional retail models and giving rise to new, integrated experiences that seamlessly blend online and offline channels.

Terms such as "globalization," "international trade," and "supply chains" underscore the increasingly interconnected and globalized nature of the retail industry. The expansion of international markets and the optimization of logistics and distribution networks have enabled retailers to source products from around the world and serve a global customer base, while also exposing them to new competitive pressures and cultural complexities.

Words like "branding," "advertising," "individualism," and "self-expression" capture the pivotal role of marketing and the integration of consumer identities and values into retail strategies. As consumers have become increasingly focused on self-expression and individuality, retailers have adapted by creating tailored experiences, leveraging branding and advertising to tap into these aspirations, and offering products that align with consumers' personal values and lifestyles.

Finally, terms such as "innovations," "disruptions," "transformations," "adaptations," and "interconnectivity" reflect the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of the retail industry in the face of continuous societal changes. Retailers must constantly innovate, adapt, and integrate new technologies, business models, and strategies to remain relevant and competitive in an increasingly complex and rapidly-changing modern world.

Through these 30 words, **Chat GBT** encapsulate the dynamic transformation of the retail landscape driven by technological advancements and shifting consumer behaviors.

The selection spans several decades, reflecting the evolutionary journey of retail from the inception of e-commerce in the mid-1990s to the recent proliferation of social commerce. Each term represents a pivotal moment or trend that has reshaped how retailers engage with customers and conduct business.

In choosing these words, Chat GBT focused on their significance in shaping modern retail practices. E-commerce marks the dawn of online shopping, while digitalization underscores the broader trend of digitizing retail operations. Omnichannel and personalization highlight the importance of seamless and tailored shopping experiences across multiple touchpoints.

Technological innovations such as augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and blockchain have revolutionized how retailers interact with consumers, offering immersive experiences, personalized recommendations, and secure transactions. Mobile payments, contactless options, and click-and-collect services have facilitated convenient and efficient transactions, catering to evolving consumer preferences.

Moreover, sustainability, data-driven decision-making, and cybersecurity underscore the growing emphasis on ethical and responsible retail practices, leveraging data insights while safeguarding customer information.

**Gemini** selected those 30 words in terms of 5 aspects: technology, experience, economy, society and values, that why the word "sustainability" is twiced in the table as it describing both the experience and the values.

Therefore, according Gemini, the modern retail landscape is significantly influenced by technology, evident in the prominence of words like "e-commerce," "mobile payments," and "big data."

Retailing has become customer-centric, focusing on personalized experiences and engagement. This is reflected by words like "personalization," "customer engagement," and "storytelling."

Modern retail is globalized and dynamic, adapting to changing market trends and disruptions. Words like "globalization," "supply chain," "logistics," and "disruption" point towards this dynamism.

Sustainability and ethical practices are becoming increasingly important in the retail industry. The inclusion of "sustainability" and "ethics" reflects this growing concern.

The values associated with consumption are also evolving, with accessibility, diversity, efficiency, and value playing a significant role. This is reflected in words like "accessibility," "diversity," and "value."

Thus, these 30 words offer a concise snapshot of the multifaceted relationship between retail and modernity, highlighting its dependence on technology, customer focus, global interconnectedness, ethical considerations, and evolving consumption values.

#### **4.2 Romanian case study**

The secondary data analyze the MKOR (2023) study "The Store of the Future from the Consumer Perspective" (2023), providing insights into Romanian consumer expectations and preferences regarding future shopping experiences.

##### **Global Trends:**

- Integration of virtual and augmented reality enables immersive shopping experiences, allowing customers to visit virtual stores and try on products.
- Artificial Intelligence predicts customer preferences, offering personalized recommendations, and providing real-time assistance.
- Contactless payments facilitates faster purchases and eliminating queues.
- Automation - robots and automated systems are used for stock management, cleaning, and customer service.
- Sustainability - focus on eco-friendly and ethical products, with detailed information on their origin and environmental impact.
- Memorable experiences: events, workshops, and exhibitions combining shopping with entertainment.

### Specific Trends in Romania:

- Significant increase in demand for digital and high-tech experiences (30% growth from 2021).
- Prioritization of efficiency, accessibility, and diverse product offerings.
- Lower interest in affordability (8%) and sustainability (3%).
- Desire for a pleasant and relaxing shopping experience (63%).
- Growing presence of online channels and digital platforms.
- Increased importance of logistics and delivery services.

The store of the future will combine online and offline experiences. Technology will play a crucial role in facilitating access to products and services. Personalization and sustainability will become increasingly important.

Retailers will need to adapt to the specific preferences of Romanian consumers.

### Limitations

The study is based on a sample of 5,057 individuals.

Data might be influenced by factors like age, income, and geographic location.

Trends may evolve and combine in different ways.

### Recommendations

Conduct further studies to analyze specific trends in various market segments.

Develop retail strategies tailored to the needs and preferences of Romanian consumers.

Invest in innovative technological solutions to enhance the shopping experience.

## 5. Results and discussion

This analysis integrates the insights from the MKOR (2023) study ("The Store of the Future from the Consumer Perspective") and the potential applications of AI research to create a comprehensive understanding of Romanian consumer preferences for the future of retail.

### Convergence and Divergence

Both the secondary data study and AI research highlight the crucial role of **technology integration** in the future of retail. Consumers in Romania, as evidenced by the MKOR (2023) study exhibit a strong desire for digital and high-tech experiences, and AI research can further explore potential applications like virtual fitting rooms or personalized recommendations.

While the MKOR (2023) study indicates a lower initial focus on sustainability among Romanian consumers, AI research can be employed to identify specific segments with higher interest in eco-friendly products. This information can help retailers develop targeted strategies to increase overall sustainability awareness and adoption.

The MKOR (2023) study, emphasizes the importance of pleasant and relaxing experiences for Romanian consumers. AI research can explore potential applications like emotion recognition to personalize the shopping experience and tailor it to individual comfort levels.

### **Beyond Convergence**

The MKOR (2023) study reveals a **prioritization of accessibility and affordability** by Romanian consumers. While AI research might not directly address affordability concerns, it can be used to identify cost-effective ways to implement desired technological advancements.

AI research, trained on a global dataset, may not fully capture the cultural nuances influencing consumer preferences in Romania. Qualitative research methods can be used alongside AI to gain a deeper understanding of these nuances.

### **Combined Strengths**

By combining the findings from the MKOR (2023) study with AI research, we can:

- Gain a richer understanding of consumer preferences beyond what the study alone can offer.
- Identify potential future trends and developments in the Romanian retail landscape.
- Develop more targeted and effective strategies to cater to the diverse needs and expectations of Romanian consumers.

### **Limitations**

This analysis acknowledges the following limitations:

The potential applications of AI research can extend beyond the three LLMs initially considered.

The reliance on secondary data restricts the ability to explore individual experiences and nuanced details.

The use of convenience sampling in the MKOR (2023) study limits the findings' generalizability to the entire Romanian population.

Despite these limitations, this approach offers valuable insights into the connection between retail and modernity in Romania. It combines the potential of AI to explore future possibilities with the grounding of real-world consumer perceptions.

### **Further Research**

By addressing these limitations and conducting further research, we can gain a even more comprehensive understanding of the future of retail in Romania and its potential impact on consumers and society, through:

- Exploring the potential of other AI research methods and tools.
- Conducting additional studies with diverse sampling methods to enhance generalizability.
- Integrating qualitative research methods to explore cultural nuances and individual experiences in greater depth.

### **6. Conclusions**

The rise of e-commerce and omnichannel shopping has fundamentally altered the retailer-consumer dynamic. Consumers are now more informed and have higher expectations for convenience and personalization. Retailers must adapt and evolve by embracing technology, offering seamless omnichannel experiences, and prioritizing customer loyalty through personalized strategies.

Retailers that recognize the evolving demographics and changing societal values will be better positioned to cater to a diverse customer base. By embracing inclusivity, sustainability, and ethical sourcing, retailers can build stronger customer relationships and long-term success.

AI and big data analytics are transforming retail by enabling personalized recommendations, optimized logistics, and enhanced customer experiences. Retailers who embrace these technologies can gain a significant competitive advantage by creating a more efficient, customer-centric ecosystem.

AR and VR hold immense potential for revolutionizing in-store experiences and product demonstrations. By creating interactive and immersive environments, retailers can engage customers on a deeper level, fostering stronger brand connections and ultimately driving sales. As these technologies evolve and become more accessible, their impact on the retail landscape promises to be significant.

Exploring the historical and contemporary relationship between retail and modernity through diverse lenses can illuminate the multifaceted links between these two domains. This knowledge is valuable for businesses, policymakers, and anyone interested in understanding the complex dynamics of our modern world.

The analysis of AI-generated words reveals the following key conclusions about the relationship between retail and modernity. Technological advancements are fundamentally shaping the retail landscape, influencing everything from how consumers shop to how retailers operate. Modern retail prioritizes creating a positive and personalized experience for each individual consumer. The retail industry is constantly adapting to changing consumer behavior, global trends, and emerging technologies. Consumers are increasingly demanding ethical and environmentally conscious practices from retailers, making sustainability a crucial aspect of modern retail.

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