

# Designing an Omni-Experience to Save Retailing: Lessons from an Italian Book Retailer

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**Overview:** Online-based retailers have made competing in the physical retail industry increasingly challenging. Building strong experiences to differentiate from the online-based players is key to survival. Brands can leverage different forms of engagement, such as sensorial or cognitive ones, to support their customer experience. “Read, Eat, Dream” (RED), a new concept by LaFeltrinelli, the major Italian bookseller, is an example of how to create “omni-experiences” by leveraging customers' lifestyles. This article outlines how LaFeltrinelli conceptualized and implemented the RED concept and presents four key design elements that enable the creation of omni-experiences. By creating an omni-experience, retailers can transform from fulfillment centers to spaces where customers can engage, which in turn increases the length of their visit and occasions for purchase. An omni-experiences also establishes the retail store as a reference point for some customers' specific activities.

**Keywords:** Omni-experience, Retail innovation, Customer experience, Bookstores

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## **Introduction**

As the retail industry changes rapidly, retailers struggle to remain viable. Many well-established global players have closed hundreds of locations, have plans to close more, or have closed shop entirely following major declines in sales. Bookstore chains are among those most affected by the entry of online-based competitors (Helmore 2018).

The retail crisis, dubbed the “Retail Apocalypse” (Danziger 2019), may hurt the future of physical retail. Increasingly, retailers are using innovation in response to the changing landscape. Digitalization is one key recent evolution of retail stores (Hagberg et al. 2016). Maximizing customer experience is another way retailers aim to achieve competitive advantage (Kranzbuhler et al. 2018), as is non-imitability. Providing customers with something radically different than the traditional product purchase is essential to survival as is differentiating from online-based players. Still, retailers have focused on understanding how to make the experience seamless across channels (Verhoef et al., 2015), rather than figuring out how to differentiate their offerings from competitors.

Despite recent challenges, physical retail is, in fact, far from dead. Online-based players have started opening physical locations—for example, Warby Parker, Bonobos, Amazon, YouTube, and Google. However, the new physical store formats differ radically from a traditional retail store. For these new players, physical locations are not merely a point of sales—they are a space for brand communication and product showroaming (Bell et al. 2015). Traditional physical retailers and online-based retailers are harnessing customer experience to create their respective niches, attract and engage customers, and secure competitive advantage.

## **Customer Experience: The New Mantra for Retail Innovation**

The focus on customer experience has its origins in the hedonic view of consumption, which deals with the sensory and affective gratification that comes from use of a product or service as opposed to the traditional utilitarian aspects (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). The hedonic view marked the first time that a non-rational and experience-based model challenged the traditional rational and utility-based model for customer purchasing choices. Observations on this new view of consumption coincided with studies exploring service quality perception by customers (Parasuraman et al. 1988; Klaus and Maklan 2013) to define the need for a shift toward an “experience economy” (Pine and Gilmore 1998). Schmitt (1999) conceptualizes the experience as comprising different components: affective, sensory, cognitive, social, physical, and behavioral.

Building on those elements, Gentile et al. (2007, p. 397) define customer experience as what “originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer’s involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual).” In particular, Gentile et al. (2007) define six dimensions of the customer experience:

- **Sensorial:** stimulation of the senses through some forms of engagement.

- Emotional: intervention on moods and emotions to create an affective relationship with the company.
- Cognitive: a conscious engagement, which implies reasoning and creativity for problem-solving.
- Pragmatic: practicality related to the concept of usability of the service.
- Lifestyle: the expression of values and beliefs in the adoption of certain behaviors.
- Relational: the consumption of the offering together with a network of similar people.

Companies can create and manage customer experience by integrating the right mix of these six dimensions into its offerings. Service design, with the definition of the service's key design elements, is the way to bring the innovation strategy to the practical level of the customer experience (Teixeira et al. 2017). The key design elements are what drive customer perception of an experience toward a desired outcome, and details in the sensorial mix or visual clues provided (Bolton et al. 2014) make customers remember the specific nature and exceptionality of an experience (Beltagui et al. 2015).

Since the six dimensions help shape the customer experience (Gentile et al. 2007), retailers may adopt different customer experience strategies based on the experiential dimensions they aim to leverage. The three main customer experience innovation strategies are sensorial and emotional, cognitive and pragmatic, and lifestyle and relational (Figure 1).

-- **Figure 1 near here** --

### ***Mixing Sensorial and Emotional Experiences***

The combination of a highly hedonic engagement by stimulating senses and the affective system is one of the most commonly used ways to enhance the customer experience (Bagdare and Jain 2013). One example is Lush, the UK-based beauty retailer that uses techniques to stimulate all the senses at once. Each Lush store uses many colors, diffuses strong smells that can be experienced from afar, and encourages customers to touch and try products. Lush stores are usually crowded and sound like a bazaar. Moreover, their products resemble pieces of food to evoke a sense of taste. The store environment, along with the playful attitude of front-line employees, creates a sense of joy. Brands like Zara and Sephora use technology to create an immersive store environment (Pantano and Servidio 2012). These retailers aim to create positive memories of the store experience in customers' minds, which is what contributes to customers' ex-post evaluation of the service (Kahneman et al. 1993) and thereby drives satisfaction and word of mouth (Goodman 2019).

### ***Mixing Cognitive and Pragmatic Experiences***

When rational purposes drive shopping activity, physical retailers can struggle to compete with online-based ones. A recent trend developed around the concept of omni-

channel retailing, the integrated and seamless management of the physical and digital channels that aims to improve customer experience by meeting the efficiency standards set by online-based players (Verhoef et al. 2015). The created experience is that of an efficient purchase process, where the store adds value through activities that cannot be performed online, such as touching and trying products (Brynjolfsson et al. 2013). Retailers perform this strategy in three ways. First, the retailer integrates the online and offline channels so customers can switch from one channel to the other in the purchase process according to which one they is more comfortable to them (Brynjolfsson et al. 2013). Second, the changes are seamless so customers don't need to put any effort into switching from one channel to the other (Bhalla 2014). Finally, and as a consequence of the first two aspects, customers can start the experience in any channel and switch at any point in the purchase process. The UK-based fashion retailer Oasis is one of the most famous example: customers can shop both online, through the website or app, and offline, in Oasis' physical stores. Oasis has iPads in its stores that enable customers to switch easily to the online channel while being in a physical store. This ability to check online with in the store is especially useful in cases when a product is out of stock in the store. Third, customers can purchase online and pick up the item in store or pay for an online item in the store and receive the delivery at home. Customers shape their purchase processes in their preferred channel at any point.

### ***Mixing Lifestyle and Relational Experiences***

A third strategy in retail comprises social experiences based on the lifestyle and relational dimensions. Some stores go beyond the product purchase to how customers use the product. Eataly, a large Italian marketplace offering online and physical retail, not only provides a way to purchase food, it also gives customers ways to learn how the food was created, including learning how to cook a meal, or tasting it in one of the retailer's restaurants (Koskela-Huotari et al. 2016). Eataly provides a "lifestyle" inside the store where customers can eat together with people that share their views and habits. The store thus acquires a new meaning (Verganti 2017) that reflects people's different motivations for visiting it (Pinto et al. 2017).

### **Omni-Experience—A Novel Approach to Customer Engagement**

In this article, we present what we call "omni-experience," an emergent strategy to innovate the customer experience by creating stores where customers can experience the use of products and the lifestyle related to that use. An omni-experience leverages the relational and lifestyle dimensions of the customer experience. We outline the four key design elements integral to creating an omni-experience and provide an overview of customer experience innovation (Figure 2). We present LaFeltrinelli's "Read, Eat, Dream" (RED) concept to illustrate how to innovate the customer experience in a novel way. We also highlight the strategic and design choices that allowed the Italian bookseller to achieve an omni-experience.

-- **Figure 2 near here** --

## **The Study**

We developed our research through a single in-depth case study (Yin 2013), based on interviews, workshops recordings, on-site observations, and secondary sources. We selected a retailer, LaFeltrinelli, the major Italian bookseller with the most retail outlets in Italy. LaFeltrinelli operates 124 retail stores in 58 towns through owned and franchised locations. Their retail store network comprises four typologies of traditional stores (in order by decreasing average square meters): megastores, local megastores, mall libraries, and local libraries. In 2012, LaFeltrinelli launched its new “Read, Eat, Dream” (RED) concept. The retailer successfully leveraged the relational and lifestyle dimensions of the customer experience and scaled its RED concept over different locations across Italy.

Our case focuses on the strategic and design choices that allowed LaFeltrinelli to shape its RED concept around the lifestyle dimension of customer experience. We followed the company closely over five years, during which time we collected all the data. We conducted semi-structured interviews with managers at the company headquarters and participated as observants and facilitators in workshops. We tracked the evolution of the innovation process, while providing LaFeltrinelli with guidance about tools to manage innovation. We were also neutral facilitators during LaFeltrinelli’s innovation process develop, without influencing company leaders’ decisions on how to proceed. We performed several rounds of ethnography (LeCompte and Schensul 2010) in both the traditional stores and RED locations. Finally, we triangulated data with secondary sources: magazines, newspapers, and scientific articles. We independently coded and clustered all the gathered material and met periodically to discuss and direct additional steps of the process. This structured way of analyzing qualitative data (Gioia et al. 2013) allowed us to draw preliminary conclusions about the process used to create the omni-experience store. We presented and discussed our preliminary findings to LaFeltrinelli’s leaders before they settled on the final model.

### **Omni-Experience to Innovate LaFeltrinelli**

In the 2000s, LaFeltrinelli faced declining sales of its core products. The book and media industries were suffering considerably from the faster, smoother, and ubiquitous purchasing process offered by online retailers. In this context, LaFeltrinelli’s leaders recognized that it needed to differentiate itself from international e-commerce giants like Amazon and Book Depository. The company envisioned re-establishing its brand as one deeply rooted in Italian culture and integral to people’s lives. Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, a former paramilitary who fought in the resistance during World War II, founded the company in 1955. With its focus on Italian tradition and the Italian way of life, customers have always perceived LaFeltrinelli as a brand close to people’s hearts. The company’s new vision aimed at re-establishing this role—namely, being part of people’s daily lives, helping them experience Italian culture, and staying close to customers.

During the new service development process, LaFeltrinelli refined its vision as it redesigned its stores’ meaning and purpose. External consultants and domain experts contributed to the redesign process, which consisted of several internal brainstorming sessions focused on how to bring the vision to market. In specific sessions several

external experts shared their thoughts about the meaningfulness of the new vision and helped the company develop its new concept. In 2010, some of LaFeltrinelli's most loyal customers were invited to test the first concept and give feedback to further refine it. Ultimately, the company unveiled its "Read, Eat, Dream" (RED) concept in 2012. RED is a multifunctional space, with a bookstore at its core, plus a fully functioning bar and restaurant. As its name implies, RED aims to provide people with a location where they can linger, beyond purchasing a product, to read and eat. "Dream" evokes the magic of leaving behind the chaos of daily life and taking time to enjoy books, food, and drink. The first RED store, which opened in Rome in 2012, was successful. RED stores are now active in Milan, Rome, Florence, Verona, and LaFeltrinelli has plans for several new openings.

The actual performances by RED stores are much higher compared to the traditional megastores, the company's most profitable format apart from RED (Table 1). Sales per square meter are approximately 70 percent higher in RED stores, which is expected given the addition of food. However, even if we only consider book sales per square meter, RED is approximately 30 percent more profitable than LaFeltrinelli's megastores. The small or impulse purchases play a relevant role in a RED store, as highlighted by the lower average transaction value and the almost doubled traffic, as compared to megastores. This is also related to by the possibility of spending time inside eating or drinking something. To encourage the impulse purchases, books in RED are slightly cheaper than in the megastores.

-- Table 1 near here --

### ***Moving Customers' Lives Into The Store***

LaFeltrinelli's leaders sought to bring activities customers typically do outside the store into the company's retail experience. LaFeltrinelli considers books and media "stories" that can immerse people in other worlds, enabling them to create strong experiences of their own. At the same time, customers read books when they feel relaxed and want to spend time reading. Customers usually have a preferred spot (sofa, chair, bed) where they read. Reading a book is a time-intensive activity customers cannot complete during a store visit. To move reading into the store, LaFeltrinelli needed to shape the retail services in such a way that customers felt at home and used the retail space as they wished. A format manager explained, "In RED, we allow customers to spend time, reading, eating, or simply chatting with friends. We don't bother them or ask them to leave after a certain time. They can sit where they want, browse books, and enjoy reading or working as they prefer."

In RED, everything is designed as it would be in a home and no one worries about what customers do. This environment was not easy to achieve, however, as people visiting stores to purchase something were not used to behaving as if they were at home, and not everyone felt at ease initially. To encourage this behavior, and to make people understand the nature of the store, LaFeltrinelli organized activities such as book clubs and shared experiences in its RED stores.

### ***Enriching Life Experience***

LaFeltrinelli sought to identify a potential consumption that people would want to undertake while reading that would also be profitable. The company evaluated many options before deciding on food and beverage. The managers reflected on the role that food has always played in Italian families. Traditionally, families gather for lunch, sharing their thoughts and experiences. Moreover, Italians like to spend time in bars in the morning, reading newspapers, discussing the news of the day, preparing for the workday. Managers envisioned the potential of adding some sort of food offering to the store, to capitalize on its central role in people's lives. LaFeltrinelli's food and beverage general manager said, "Because food is culture, memory, and knowledge, invention, and tradition, need and pleasure. . . And it has a social and sharing nature, for time to spend together."

LaFeltrinelli conducted extensive studies on what people do while reading. In the early morning, many Italians still read newspapers while chatting and having breakfast. In the afternoon, students gather to work and read while consuming coffee and pastries. LaFeltrinelli revolutionized the scope of its store. Rather than simply adding a product category or making people try or experience the product, LaFeltrinelli encouraged people to return, whenever they wanted, to read their books, even if they purchased them long ago.

Including a bar and restaurant in RED stores allowed people to spend more time there. Food and beverages functioned as enablers for an extended visit focused on immersing customers in reading books. As a LaFeltrinelli food and beverage manager explained, "We aimed to make people use and read books inside the store. Making them comfortable was not enough. We had to deeply investigate how people like to read a book to understand which additional offerings could persuade people to stay in the store."

### **Omni-Experience Retail in Practice**

Expanding one's customer experience strategy to include customers' lifestyles and life experiences may be difficult. In the RED case, for example, LaFeltrinelli needed new and different capabilities to run a bar and restaurant within a store. Leaders considering creating an omni-experience must avoid over-complexity in designing the new store to avoid causing customers' misunderstanding or paralysis (Schwartz 2004). A delicate tension exists between maintaining a certain degree of freedom in what customers can do in the store, and the necessity of keeping it an organic concept. Thus, moving towards the in-store consumption experience entails carefully managing some key design elements.

### ***Integrating the Offering***

In the managers' words, by adding food, they "didn't want to give a supermarket feeling." Moreover, adding food was not a straightforward choice: it meant giving less space to books and potentially losing their primary business purpose. It was a difficult but necessary decision to sustain the shift from a book fulfillment center to a provider of an omni-experience to customers. Thus, LaFeltrinelli's choice of food and beverage as an additional category is based on two pillars: food and beverage often go along with reading and both are pillars of Italian culture. As books, recipes are an expression of



regional culture and history. To provide a sense of integration among the different product categories, LaFeltrinelli leveraged the cultural elements present in food and in books to make them recall each other. Most meals offered in a RED restaurant are based on book: they recall a certain specific region in which a novel is set. Book titles are used to name the dishes, and some recipes even come directly from the narratives. A RED store manager said, “This kind of hybrid space can work as well as not. It depends on the integration among the different products, the theme that creates interdependencies. Customers should be able to read the palimpsest.”

Similarly, book space is given to local emerging authors and local food books. On the shelves near those books, LaFeltrinelli places some ingredients and ready-made preparations, which also recall the books. RED is not simply a place to purchase books or food, it is a place to access and live both parts of the offering in a way that each customer can shape to their specific desires. This way of organizing yields huge benefits in terms of sales. Customers that enter the store to stop at the bar or restaurant receive stimuli towards reading and eventually purchasing books; customers entering to browse and search among books are naturally invited to sit down and start reading them, enhancing the experience through the curated selection of drinks or meals.

### ***Integrating the Spaces***

The physical spaces play a pertinent role in shaping a place where people can live, rather than creating a supermarket by adding corners. Following the new strategy centered on creating an omni-experience store, and the decision to add a product category, LaFeltrinelli tested the new concept with customers. The feedback customers gave focused mainly on the necessity of perceiving the store as a unique place, a continuum in which the offerings intermix. LaFeltrinelli customers didn't want a place that *has* a bookstore and a restaurant, but a place that *is* a bookstore and a restaurant at the same time. Following this, in the standard RED store, the layout is not strictly organized according to the different products (Figure 3). The different zones are still recognizable, more focused on book display than bar consumption, but differentiated from competitors in two key dimensions:

- There is no clear division of spaces (tables) dedicated to reading and bar/restaurant consumption. The physical location sustains the integration between the two consumption experiences. People are free to combine them as they wish. Stimulating demand for the other is not based on a push logic, as occurs when up-selling or cross-selling. Rather, people naturally benefit from the opportunity as if they were consuming products at home.
- The multiple access points enable a personalized journey. RED supports customers in creating their journey by combining parts of the experiences offered through high space flexibility. In particular, LaFeltrinelli organizes its RED stores to be accessed from multiple locations, depending on the reason for visiting. Letting people choose their path and select what experience creates a familiar and home-like feeling.

– – **Figure 3 near here** – –

The spaces in RED stores are generally always visible to customers. For example, people who browse the books can always see the tables, selecting where and when to continue their consumption experience. The main objective is to enable people to experience a place that can be used and shaped based on specific personal needs and moods. As a RED sales assistant explained, “RED is not a bookstore, nor a restaurant. I would define it as a place.” A food and beverage manager stressed the concept of integration, which is central in creating an omni-experience store: “Having food and books in the same place is not a novelty, Barnes & Noble and Starbucks have done this for many years. In reality, our idea is different . . . it doesn’t consist of exploiting an existing customer base in a specific location. . . Today, when customers enter Barnes & Noble, I believe they have no doubts they are entering a bookstore. If they want, they can also have a Starbucks coffee inside. When customers go to RED, they don’t have a clear idea of whether they are entering a bookstore or a restaurant. Everything is integrated. That’s the real difference compared to other experiences.”

### ***Empowered Personnel***

Traditional marketing studies focus on front-line employees, both in terms of their role and the techniques used to promote purchases. In particular, cross-selling and up-selling are common practices to stimulate in-store sales. Traditionally, the front-line employee’s role is to support customers while trying to sell them additional products based on a push logic. During the brainstorming sessions held throughout the innovation process, RED managers recognized the need to switch to a more customer-centric way of managing store visits. Only by allowing customers to choose how to organize the multiple possibilities given by the store, could they take the benefits offered by the omni-experience retail and live part of their life within the store. Thus, LaFeltrinelli placed special focus on “allowing customers to shape their own experience,” without pushing or directing them toward specific products or activities. To sustain this vision, front-line employees switched from being company representatives responsible for customer satisfaction and maximizing purchases to facilitators of customer experiences. The focus switched to making people feel at home, helping when needed. One particular change in the mindset relates to the management of non-purchasers. Typically, retailers consider customers that spend time reading in traditional bookstores as problematic and discourage this behavior. In RED stores, people are free to spend as much time as they like doing what they like.

### ***Flexible Customer Journey***

Reflecting on the in-store customer journey and experience, LaFeltrinelli’s managers understood that to sustain the omni-experience, they needed to adapt their customer experience management, compared to traditional stores. Compared to megastores, RED stores cannot perfectly control the customer journey, so they organize the store through key activities and parts of the experience customers can live with no predefined, dominant paths. For RED managers, the key principle is that “The store must be flexible to allow customers to pick what they want.” For this reason, a specific path and activities during customer visits cannot characterize the customer journey proposition.

In RED stores, people can configure the activities as they wish, which creates a tailored and unique experience. While the ultimate goal is selling books (and food), space is given

to those who simply want to spend time in the store. We observed several people who started their journey with a specific focus, but ended up spending a relevant amount of time in the store, taking advantage of the second product category. A RED front-line employee said, “The selling ceremony is different from a traditional store. If you go into a bookstore where you can find more than 50,000 books, you need someone to show you, someone taking care of your visit. In RED, it’s easier for the customer. Products sell themselves by creating a unique and coherent store centered around them.”

As in customers’ lives, a RED store should be easy to discover and interpret. It should function as a platform of possibilities among which customers select the ones they want to experience. LaFeltrinelli leveraged the four key design elements to create its omni-experience RED store according to what, how, and why (Table 2).

– – **Table 2 near here** – –

### **Omni-Experience as a Customer Experience Innovation Strategy**

The omni-experience strategy presented in our case study has some distinct differences compared to the hedonic engagement and omni-channel strategies. Compared to the pure hedonic engagement (Pine and Gilmore 1998), which enhances the current experience through the stimulation of senses and the creation of memories, the omni-experience goes beyond the current experience and enlarges the scope of the store (Bellini et al. 2017). Compared to the omni-channel strategies (Verhoef et al. 2015), the omni-experiences differs in that the store adapts to people's lives and beliefs, rather than to their behavior and use of digital instruments. With an omni-channel strategy, stores aim to create smooth experiences, in which customers can transition from one channel to the other without perceiving any change in their relationship with the brand. The consequence is that channels must be easy to use and aligned over any performance (price shown, inventory). In an omni-experience store, the smooth transition is enacted among the different parts that build on one’s own life and consumption experience with the mix of products. The smoothness of the experience is guaranteed by the coherence among the different pieces of the offering, the reasons why they are mixed, and the ease for an individual customer to mix them as they prefer.

Creating an omni-experience doesn't mean simply mixing different pieces of an offering. Barnes & Noble currently designs its stores with the traditional book section and a café. No physical wall separates the bookstore and the café, but Barnes & Noble stores differ from RED stores in that the offerings are not integrated into the same story, and the front-line employees (librarians, café employees) remain separate. The two respective experiences are noticeably different. IKEA, another brand that integrates different categories around the concept of Sweden, lacks in the other three key design elements (integration of spaces, empowered personnel, and flexible customer journey). As for the multi-channel that has traditionally been a first step in the evolution toward the omni-channel, we could say that IKEA and Barnes & Noble currently provide multi-experiences—that is, different experiences, not fully or seamlessly integrated (Table 3).

-- Table 3 near here --

Creating an omni-experience requires refinement to make everything coherent, connected, and smooth. Any retailer that offers a product category that has a key role in people's lives can use the omni-experience strategy. Examples include clothing, which shapes how we present ourselves to others; electronics, which enable access to one's virtual world; furniture, which shapes one's daily living experience; and cars, which are expressions of people's lifestyle. An omni-experience store can offer any product category that provides a relational and lifestyle experience. Moreover, the creation of omni-experiences can be an opportunity for B2B sellers and actors engaged in other types of business relationships. As in the case presented, retailers need to identify the use that their customers make of products so they can provide additional services to make the usage easier or more comfortable. Creating an omni-experience requires delving more deeply into understanding how customers relate to a company's offering and supporting their interaction with the offering in their daily experience.

## Conclusion

Creating an omni-experience store is an emerging strategy for customer experience innovation that shows promise in helping retailers achieve competitive advantage. Starting with a strongly experiential product, like books in this case study, an omni-experience consists of giving people multiple ways to experience the products, and enlarging the store's scope from being centered around a product category to embracing a complete use of the combination of products as customer would in their own lives. If store design and product selection are purposeful and coherent, there is no need to monitor and manage customers' specific journeys, as they will do so themselves. Envisioning people's life experiences is a way to start an innovation process to shape a company's retail services as an omni-experience store. In presenting an emerging customer experience innovation strategy, we provide actionable knowledge for retail managers to create and implement an omni-experience.

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Table 1.—RED stores’ performances compared to megastores

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Sales/sqm	+72%	+74%	+83%
Sales/sqm (excluding food)	+37%	+39%	+40%
Average price (book)	-5%	-5%	+9%
Average transaction value	-24%	-23%	-28%
Traffic	+68%	+117%	+142%
Rotation (book)	+59%	+76%	+63%

Note: RED performances as percentual variation compared to LaFeltrinelli megastores, year by year.

Table 2.—Key design elements explained for RED

<b>Key Design Element</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>Why</b>	<b>How</b>
<b>Integration of Offering</b>	The different pieces of the offering are connected by an overall theme.	Make the overall experience coherent.	Outcome of the store’s meaning redesign
<b>Integration of Spaces</b>	No walls, aisles, or other barriers create closed spaces for the different experiences.	Make it easy to switch between different product categories.	Resulted from the concept testing with customers
<b>Empowered Front-Line Employees</b>	Personnel are experts in all parts of in-store offering.	Make the overall experience seamless.	Output of the brainstorming sessions
<b>Flexible Customer Journey</b>	No pre-determined journey—each customer determines their journey.	Giving customers the freedom to tailor their own experience.	Outcome of the store’s meaning redesign



Table 3.—Comparison of RED and multi-experience retailers

	<b>RED</b>	<b>Barnes &amp; Noble</b>	<b>IKEA</b>
<b>Integration of Offering</b>	Complete: Books and food relate to each other with novel-based dishes and food-based books.	None: food is added to increase comfort for people visiting the store.	Food and furniture are connected by the concept of Sweden.
<b>Integration of Spaces</b>	Complete: No walls or aisles divide the different pieces of offering.	Complete: No walls or aisles divide the different pieces of offering.	None: The food is located in a section separate from the furniture.
<b>Empowered Personnel</b>	Complete: All employees know about food and books.	None: Personnel are specialized (café staff and librarians).	None: Personnel belong to the furniture or food section
<b>Flexible Customer Journey</b>	Complete: Customers can choose the path they prefer.	Complete: customers can choose the path they prefer	Limited: Customers need to follow a path but can take some shortcuts.

Figure 1.—Customer experience dimensions and related innovation strategies

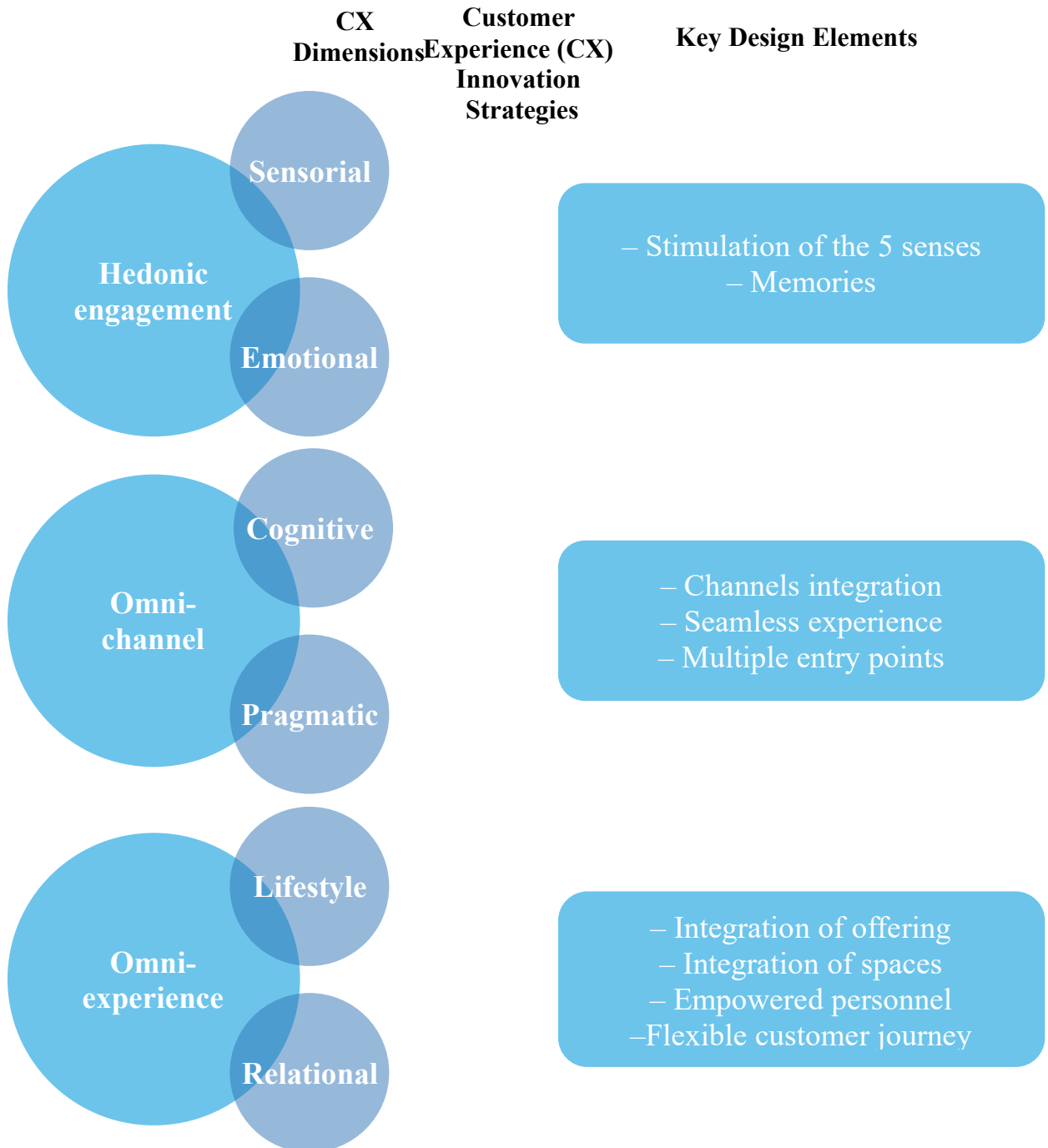


Figure 2.—Framework to transition toward an omni-experience store

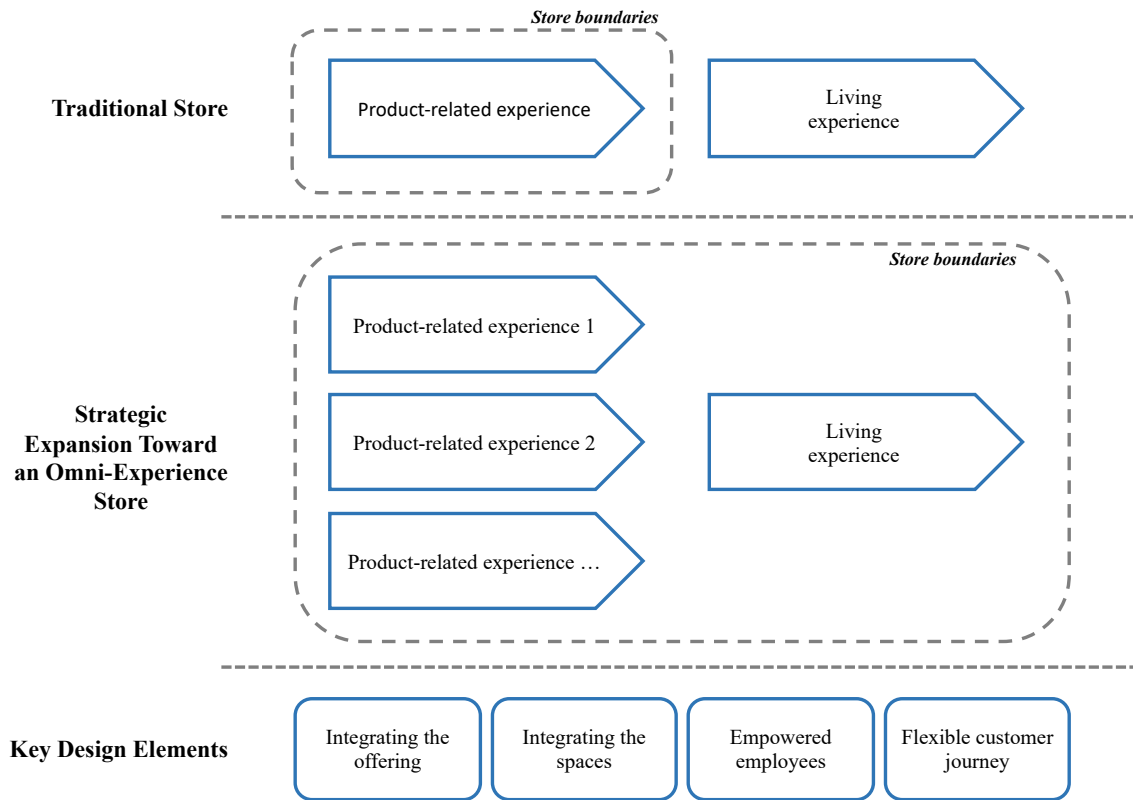


Figure 3.—Annotated diagram of a typical RED store

