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# What drives consumers to use local online retail platforms? The influence of non-place-specific and place-specific motives

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ABSTRACT

Local online retail platforms (LORPs) are gaining popularity as digital channels that can increase physical retail agglomerations' attractiveness and viability by stimulating online sales and consumer footfall. However, insights are needed to enrich academic understanding and guide practitioners in their decision-making process regarding use and optimization of these platforms for boosting retail agglomeration vitality. Drawing on uses and gratifications theory, an online survey of 442 Dutch consumers revealed that positive attitudes toward browsing LORPs induced both online purchase and offline visit intentions. Interestingly, despite LORPs' local focus, non-place-specific motives more substantially impacted positive browsing-related attitudes toward LORPs than place-specific ones.

## 1. Introduction

While the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated online shopping and e-commerce, bringing challenges for physical retail agglomerations, such as shopping centers and main commercial streets, to remain viable, it has also created opportunities to enhance their attractiveness (Lashgari and Shahab, 2022; Ngoh and Groening, 2022; Silva and Cachinho, 2021). To address these challenges and capitalize on opportunities, local entrepreneurs are increasingly collaborating through "local online retail platforms" (LORPs). These platforms, similar to national or global online e-commerce platforms such as Bol.com and Amazon, enable the exchange of information, transactions, and order fulfillment between consumers and retailers (Aguirre Reid et al., 2022; Bärsch et al., 2021). However, LORPs in this study differ from national and global online e-commerce platforms in that they exclusively offer products from local retailers within a specific retail agglomeration. Thus, LORPs provide a platform for consumers to engage with and support a particular retail agglomeration and its local retailers.

Although LORPs have gained prominence, relevant academic research is limited. Existing studies have mainly adopted a supply-side perspective, examining the defining characteristics and features of various types of LORPs (Bärsch et al., 2021; Schade et al., 2018), as well as the drivers and barriers to retailer participation in LORPs (Bärsch et al., 2021). Despite previous research suggesting that LORPS must develop a solid and very active customer base to thrive (Schade et al., 2018), little attention has been paid to its demand side in the academic literature.

By addressing this research gap, our study aims to contribute to the understanding of consumer behavior in the evolving LORP landscape. We investigated two key aspects that shed light on consumer use of these platforms. First, we examined the influence of consumer motives, encompassing both place- and non-place-specific motives, on attitudes toward browsing LORPs. This examination provided insights into the factors that shape consumers' perceptions and evaluations of LORPs. Second, we explored these attitudes' relationship with both online purchase and offline visit intentions to better understand consumer behavior in relation to LORPs.

To achieve these research objectives, we analyzed data from an online survey of 442 Dutch consumers based on uses and gratifications theory (UGT) (Katz et al., 1973). This theory offers a framework for analyzing how consumers use and derive satisfaction from media and communication technologies. It posits that individuals choose media platforms based on their needs and examines media's effects on people, providing a foundation for understanding consumer behavior in the context of LORPs. Additionally, we build on existing research on various online retail platforms (e.g., Betzing et al., 2020; McLean et al., 2020) to

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gain insight into consumer motivations and their use of online platforms in general. Furthermore, we draw on existing research on location-related consumer behavior (e.g., Debenedetti et al., 2014; Noble et al., 2006) to explore locally related consumer motives for using LORPs. By integrating these perspectives, our study advances the understanding of consumer behavior in the context of LORPs and contributes to the existing body of knowledge in this field.

This study contributes to the retail marketing field by addressing the call for more research on digital marketing channels' contribution to physical retail agglomerations' attractiveness and viability (AbedRabbo et al., 2021). We achieve this by exploring how different place- and non-place-specific consumer motives shape consumer attitudes toward LORP browsing. Furthermore, we offer cross-channel insights by evaluating the relationship between consumer attitudes toward browsing LORPs and their subsequent intentions to utilize LORPs for online purchases and physical visits to retail agglomerations. Additionally, this study provides recommendations for practitioners seeking to enhance the attractiveness and viability of their retail agglomerations through effective LORP implementation and management.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides the research background, develops the hypotheses, and proposes the research model for this study. Section 3 outlines the study setting, data collection, and measures. Section 4 presents the measurement and structural models. Finally, Section 5 concludes the paper by discussing theoretical contributions, practical implications, limitations, and future research directions.

## 2. Research background

### 2.1. LORPs for retail agglomerations

Retail agglomerations constitute clusters of businesses in a particular geographical area, such as shopping centers, main commercial streets, and commercial districts (Teller et al., 2016). These agglomerations create synergies and mutual benefits for retailers and consumers by offering various products and services at a single location (Teller et al., 2016). To enhance the appeal and profitability of a retail agglomeration, stakeholders such as retailers, service providers, property owners, shopping center managers, city marketing organizations, and local governments often engage in collaborative (digital) marketing activities, such as organizing events, improving the retail agglomeration's overall atmosphere, and using online channels to increase its attractiveness to consumers (Risselada et al., 2018; Hagen et al., 2022b).

In recent years, fueled by cost-effectiveness and accessibility, digital marketing activities have been increasingly used (Hagen et al., 2022b), of which collective websites and social media pages are the most prevalent (Risselada et al., 2018; Hagen et al., 2022b). Traditionally, retail agglomeration websites have mainly provided non-transactional information, such as outlet details, event calendars, and local activities in city centers (Risselada et al., 2018). However, a new type of website—the LORP—has recently emerged. These LORPs enable consumers to purchase products online from multiple retailers within the same retail agglomeration (Bärsch et al., 2021; Schade et al., 2018). Thus, LORPs allow consumers to engage with and support a particular retail agglomeration and its local retailers.

Although an international phenomenon, LORPs are prevalent in Europe (Schade et al., 2018). These platforms exhibit diverse characteristics involving featured retailers and products, inclusion or exclusion of non-commerce functionalities, transaction facilitation methods, geographical scope, and ownership (Bärsch et al., 2021; Schade et al., 2018). For example, "Online City Wuppertal" in Germany is a comprehensive website featuring profiles of predominantly local retailers offering a wide range of products. It also provides information about Wuppertal's city center. In the Netherlands, "warenhuis.groningen.nl" provides a wide range of products but no city-marketing-related information on Groningen. On a different note, the Dutch LORPs 'Local Heroes' and 'Digitale Dorpspleinen' distinguish themselves by focusing on selling fresh produce, mainly from small grocers and specialty food shops in specific retail areas. To maintain the freshness and quality of these perishable goods, these platforms limit their delivery services to the immediate vicinity of the retail locations where the produce is sold (Hagen et al., 2022a). The current study builds on the definition established by Bärsch et al. (2021) and defines LORPs as websites that facilitate the exchange of information, transactions, and fulfillment between consumers and local retailers within a specific retail agglomeration.

By aggregating the offerings of local retailers on a single online platform, LORPs offer (local) consumers the possibility of connecting with and supporting a particular retail agglomeration by providing convenience in browsing and purchasing the assortment of products from local retailers. From a retailer's perspective, LORPS can potentially increase visibility, stimulate online and offline sales, enhance consumer engagement, and enable data collection for marketing purposes. Furthermore, LORPs can help small retailers overcome digital transformation problems caused by a lack of knowledge, financial resources, and time needed for a successful online presence (Bärsch et al., 2021). However, LORPs must attract consumers to be successful (Schade et al., 2018). Previous research has indicated that consumers' behavioral intentions toward online platforms are strongly predicted by their attitudes (i.e., their favorable or unfavorable evaluations of a particular behavior) toward these platforms (McLean et al., 2020; Muthitcharoen et al., 2011). The following section focuses on these factors that influence consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions toward LORPs.

### 2.2. Factors influencing consumer attitude and behavioral intention toward LORPs

Previous research has shown that consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions toward online retail platforms are influenced by the value they seek from these platforms (e.g., McLean et al., 2020; Ray et al., 2019). This study extends this understanding by using UGT as a framework to explore the specific factors driving consumer thoughts and intent in the context of LORPs.

UGT theorizes that individuals are proactive in their media choices and seek specific media sources to fulfill particular needs or gratification (Katz et al., 1973). While this theory was initially applied to traditional media, such as television and radio, it has since been utilized to investigate consumers' motivations for digital media use, including social media (Lim & Kumar, 2019; Sung et al., 2010) and online retail platforms (Betzing et al., 2020; Dholakia et al., 2004). UGT emphasizes the dynamic role of users in media consumption, focusing on the interplay between their needs, sought gratifications, and the resultant effects of media use. Furthermore, the theory suggests that user attitudes toward media are shaped by their past experiences and expected gratifications, a concept that is consistent with the expectancy–value model (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1972), which posits that consumers' attitudes toward a behavior such as browsing a LORP are influenced by their beliefs about the outcomes of that behavior and the value they attribute to these outcomes.

As LORPs compete for consumer attention amidst an array of media channels, such as print, individual online shops, and established online marketplaces, it is imperative to understand what gratifications attract consumers to these platforms. Previous research has indicated that entertainment-, convenience-, and reward-seeking are positively related to consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions toward online platforms (e.g., Anshu et al., 2022; McLean et al., 2020). Therefore, it is plausible that the aforementioned motives shape consumer positions toward LORPs.

However, LORPs are unique in that they provide consumers with access to multiple retailers within a specific retail agglomeration. This is a novel opportunity for consumers to engage with and support a particular retail agglomeration and its retailers. Consequently, place-

specific motives, such as consumer attachment to a specific retail agglomeration (van den Berg et al., 2021) and the ethical motive of supporting physical retail agglomerations and their retailers through purchasing behavior (Carrington et al., 2010), may significantly shape consumers' LORP-related attitudes and behavioral intention.

By leveraging UGT as the underlying theoretical framework, this study probes the complex relationship between consumers' motives, attitudes, and behavioral intentions toward making online purchases using LORPs or visiting the corresponding retail agglomeration, thereby shedding new light on consumer behavior within the retail sector. The subsequent sections elaborate on the research model and hypotheses development.

### 2.3. Research model and hypotheses

Our research model (Fig. 1) proposes that consumer motives for using LORPs play a key role in shaping attitudes toward LORPs for browsing, which, in turn, strongly predict subsequent physical offline visits and online purchase intentions. We distinguished between two motive types: generic non-place-specific consumer motives commonly discussed in the e-commerce and retail marketing literature (i.e., convenience-, entertainment-, and reward-seeking) and place-specific motives relevant to the LORP context (i.e., ethical shopping- and place attachment-seeking). Furthermore, recognizing that these platforms serve a wide range of users, we considered the moderating effects of age and gender in our model, as these variables could influence the interplay between motives, attitudes, and behavioral intentions.

#### 2.3.1. Attitude toward browsing LORPs as an antecedent of behavioral intentions

Previous research has demonstrated a link between consumers' evaluations of products, services, and behaviors and their ensuing actions (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1972). In the context of this study, "attitude" refers to consumers' evaluation of browsing a LORP based on perceived derived value. Attitudes toward online retail platforms have been correlated with online purchasing intentions (McLean et al., 2020; Muthitcharoen et al., 2011), whereas attitudes toward retail agglomerations can predict visit intentions (AbedRabbo et al., 2022). Further, the "cross-channel effects" or "channel synergy" concept suggests that consumer attitudes about one retail channel can influence their attitudes and behaviors toward other channels (Pantano and Viassone, 2015; Verhoef et al., 2007). This is supported by the finding that online attitudes can significantly influence offline behavior (Grewal et al., 2017). Based on these insights, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H1**. Consumer attitudes toward browsing LORPs positively influence offline visit intention for the corresponding retail agglomeration.

**H2**. Consumer attitudes toward browsing LORPs positively influence online purchase intention on the LORP platform itself.

#### 2.3.2. Non-place-specific motives as antecedents of consumer attitude

In the field of e-commerce and retail marketing, seeking convenience, entertainment, and reward have commonly been identified as factors that influence consumer attitudes toward using online retail platforms (e.g., AbedRabbo et al., 2021; Anshu et al., 2022). Convenience is derived when consumers can maximize their shopping opportunities while minimizing shopping effort (Anshu et al., 2022; Noble et al., 2006). Online and offline shopping, often at small local retailers, can be time-consuming because they offer a limited product range (Noble et al., 2006). Furthermore, the limited opening hours of physical shops can be an inconvenience of physically visiting retail agglomerations (Noble et al., 2006). A LORP offers consumers convenience by providing a single, always-accessible point of online access to various local retailers and reduces the effort needed to search for information and browse individual local retailers. We therefore posit:

**H3**. Convenience-seeking positively influences consumers' attitudes toward using LORPs for browsing.

Entertainment-seeking refers to the desire for fun, enjoyment, and novelty in the shopping process (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003) and is another essential motive that shapes consumer attitudes toward online shopping (Betzing et al., 2020; McLean et al., 2020). Entertainment-seeking is, for some consumers, an even stronger reason to shop, visit a retail agglomeration, or use retailers' or retail agglomerations' digital marketing channels than purchasing and using products (AbedRabbo et al., 2021, 2022). LORPs offer information and shopping opportunities that may be perceived as entertaining by consumers who enjoy browsing for products or being informed about retail

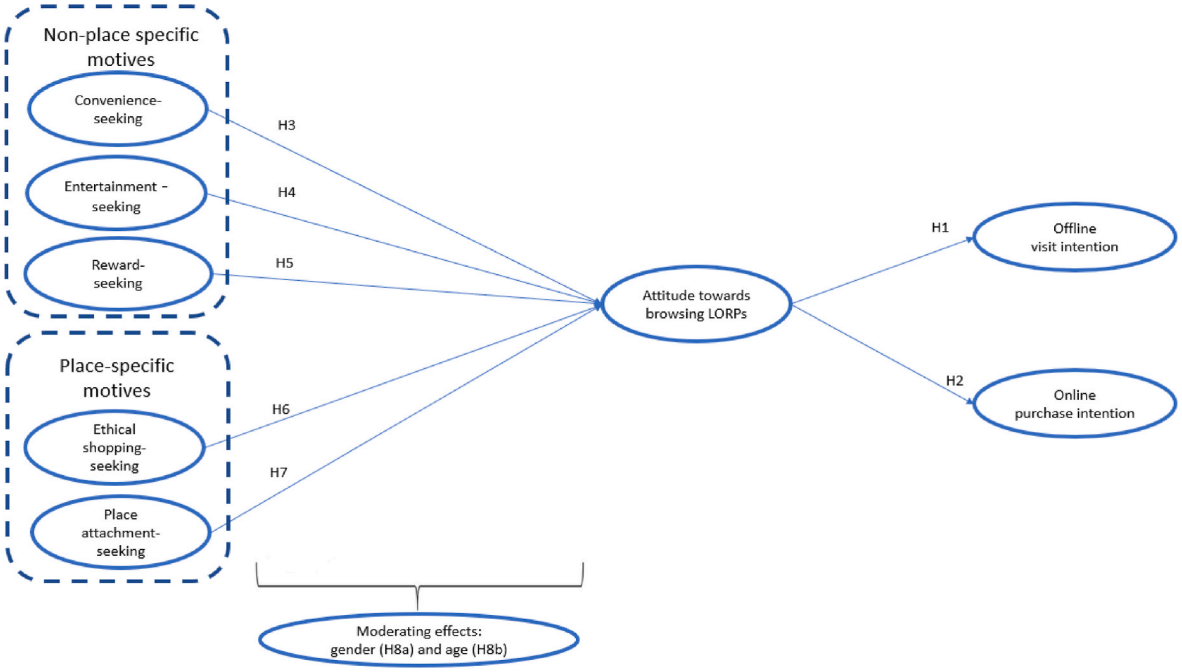


**Fig. 1.** Research framework.

agglomerations. Therefore, we propose the following:

**H4**. *Entertainment-seeking positively influences consumers' attitudes toward using LORPs for browsing.*

Reward-seeking refers to consumers' desire for benefits, such as discounts or special offers (Lim & Kumar, 2019; Ray et al., 2019). Rewards in the form of loyalty programs, coupons, and sweepstakes may entice consumers to connect and become involved with a brand (Ray et al., 2019). Although incentives do not influence commitment (Lim & Kumar, 2019), reward-seeking has been identified as a motivator for consumers to engage with online retail platforms (Ray et al., 2019). In the context of town-center retail agglomerations, consumers use digital marketing channels to gather information about promotions and discounts during the customer journey (AbedRabbo et al., 2021). Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

**H5**. *Reward-seeking positively influences consumers' attitudes toward using LORPs for browsing.*

#### 2.3.3. Place-specific motives as antecedents of attitude toward browsing LORPs

Ethical shopping is the conscious and deliberate act of making purchasing decisions based on personal values and beliefs, prioritizing social and environmental responsibility (Carrington et al., 2010; Davies and Gutsche, 2016). It considers the impact of consumer choices on various aspects such as the vitality of physical retail or specific local retail agglomerations and retailers. Ethical shopping may be indicated by the types of products consumers buy or where or from whom they buy them (Tena-Monferrer et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2020). A relevant aspect of ethical shopping in this study is the preference for buying with a specific retail agglomeration because it is a way to support the agglomeration and its retailers. This preference translates into the desire to ensure the continuity and prosperity of these retail agglomerations, a sentiment that underpins ethical shoppers' motives. However, situational factors such as store distance, limited variety, and time constraints may impede consumers from carrying out their ethical shopping intentions (Atkinson, 2012; Carrington et al., 2010). LORPs can facilitate the execution of ethical shopping intentions by enabling online and offline purchases from retailers within specific agglomerations. Accordingly, LORPs may be perceived as potentially valuable tools for ethical shopping because they may help bridge the gap between consumers' intended and actual shopping behaviors. Based on this rationale, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H6**. Ethical shopping-seeking positively influences consumers' attitudes toward using LORPs for browsing.

Place attachment refers to the strong emotional bond that individuals develop with specific places, often due to positive experiences, memories, or social interactions (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). The defining characteristic of place attachment is that it motivates individuals to strengthen their relationship with a place over time, thus reinforcing their attachment (Debenedetti et al., 2014). This reinforcement can constitute investing time, money, and effort toward maintaining a relationship with a place. Studies on retail service firms have found a positive relationship between place attachment and behavioral outcomes such as loyalty, word-of-mouth promotion, and visit intention in offline settings (Debenedetti et al., 2014; van den Berg et al., 2021). Horáková et al. (2022) expanded the concept of place attachment to the online environment and found that consumers can also form attachments to online retail stores. However, they also noted that this attachment does not necessarily prevent consumer switching behavior because of the low switching cost and availability of multiple alternatives, especially in the online environment. Based on these previous insights, which imply that consumers may also use digital channels to strengthen their physical and online relationships with retail agglomerations, we hypothesize the following:

**H7**. *Place attachment-seeking positively influences consumer attitude toward using LORPs for browsing*

#### 2.3.4. Moderating effects of gender and age

Prior research in retail marketing has found that age and gender can moderate how consumer motives influence their attitudes toward retail platforms or local retailers (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Noble et al., 2006). For example, Noble et al. (2006) showed that men frequently prioritize elements such as information-gathering, deal-seeking, and convenience in their shopping experience, while women may find more enjoyment in social interaction during the shopping and browsing processes. Furthermore, earlier research has indicated that older consumers tend to be more loyal to local businesses, likely because of a combination of factors such as familiarity, trust, personal relationships with business owners, and a sense of community that these establishments can provide (Darden and Dorsch, 1990; Stone, 1954). However, older consumers tend to be more apprehensive toward new technologies (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H8**. Age (H8a) and gender (H8b) moderate the relationship between consumer motives and attitudes toward browsing LORPs.

## 3. Research method

We conducted an online survey to evaluate our hypotheses by collecting self-reported responses from 442 Dutch consumers. The study design was approved by the appropriate ethics review board and all study participants provided informed consent. Given the nascent nature of LORPs, their limited adoption among retail agglomerations, the variation in their defining characteristics and features, and the lack of interaction with LORPs by most consumers (Risselada et al., 2018), we opted for a pre-experimental (with only an experimental group) methodology where we introduced all respondents to the same hypothetical LORP at the beginning of the survey. This hypothetical LORP was described as a website that offers information about the retail agglomeration, its retailers, available products, and opportunities for online purchases (including pick-up and delivery options). Respondents were prompted to envision the introduced hypothetical LORP as if it existed for the retail agglomeration they had last visited. They were then guided to complete the survey using this imagined LORP for their most recently visited retail agglomeration.

### 3.1. Measures

The survey contained validated scales adapted from previous studies and fine-tuned to fit the context of retail agglomerations (see Appendix 1). All scales were administered using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("totally disagree") to 5 ("totally agree"). Convenience-seeking was measured with four items adapted from Kleijnen et al. (2007), entertainment-seeking with four items from Betzing et al. (2020), and reward-seeking with three items from Lim and Kumar (2019). Ethical shopping (four items) and place attachment-seeking (six items) were taken from Zhang et al. (2020) and Boley et al. (2021), respectively. Attitude and online purchase intention were measured using four items adapted from Muthitcharoen et al. (2011). Finally, offline visit intention was measured using four items from Betzing et al. (2020).

Because we were working with a hypothetical LORP, we adopted Betzing et al.'s (2020) approach, introducing statements regarding motivations with the sentence "I would use the LORP …." Similarly, statements regarding visit intention were introduced with the phrase "Using the LORP would motivate me …." This strategy ensured alignment and consistency with the hypothetical LORP context.

### 3.2. Data collection and sample

In the first week of December 2022, we collected data via a consumer

panel organized by a Dutch market research agency specializing in retail-related research. The research agency ensured a truly random sampling from their panel, selecting only respondents living in the Netherlands and over the age of 18 years. Questionnaires were sent out via the company's internal survey system. Stringent filters were implemented to ensure the quality of the collected data. Only completed surveys were accepted. In addition, we excluded data from panelists who did not pass two attention checks of negatively formulated statements. We also discarded responses from straight-liners and those who completed the survey in less than 3 min. The 3-min cutoff was chosen based on a pilot study that suggested the survey would take approximately 11 min; we deemed responses provided in less time as potentially lacking the depth and consideration necessary for our analysis. After applying these filters, the final sample comprised 442 useable responses. The sample consisted of 258 women and 184 men aged 18–84 years [M = 50.13].

### 3.3. Data analysis

We tested the proposed model using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with the SmartPLS 4 program (Ringle et al., 2022). We considered PLS-SEM an appropriate method because it is well-suited for exploratory research focusing on understanding and predicting relationships between variables (Hair et al., 2022). The data were analyzed using a two-stage approach. First, we examined the reliability and validity of the measurement model, and we then estimated the hypothesized model. In addition, multigroup analyses were performed to analyze the potential moderating effects. As the data for both the dependent and independent constructs were gathered from the same respondents, there was a risk of common method bias (CMB). Two different tests were used to check for CMB. First, Harman's single-factor test indicated no CMB; the total variance for a single factor was 37.07%, which was below the maximum recommended value (50%) (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Second, we used the approach proposed by Kock (2017), where inner model variance inflation factor values $\geq 3.3$ indicate the presence of CMB. The values for all the latent constructs were between 1.000 and 2.288, suggesting CMB was not a critical problem in our study.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Measurement model

We evaluated the psychometric properties of the measurement model (Table 1) to assess its reliability and validity. The Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability scores were used to assess the reliability of the model. Reliability was confirmed, as all values exceeded 0.7 (Cronbach, 1951). To establish validity, we assessed convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity requires that each measurement item be strongly correlated with its related constructs. Convergent validity was evaluated using item loadings, t-values, and average variance extracted (AVE). The item loadings ranged from 0.670 to 0.972 (see Appendix 1) and thus reached the average 0.7 threshold. As presented in Appendix 1, the t-values of the outer model loadings exceeded the recommended 1.96 (Becker et al., 2023). Finally, the AVE values were above the recommended minimum of 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was observed, as the inter-construct correlations were below the square root of the AVEs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio between any two reflective constructs was below 0.9 (Henseler et al., 2016).

### 4.2. Structural model

The normed fit index of 0.848 and standardized root mean square residual of 0.075 indicated that the structural model fit was acceptable. However, for a better indication of model fit, we relied on the coefficients of determination ($R^2$) for the dependent constructs (endogenous variables), significance levels, and t-values of the structural path (Hair et al., 2019). We performed a consistent PLS-SEM bootstrapping procedure with 5000 samples using the replacement method (Hair et al., 2019) to test the significance of each path coefficient, standard errors, and t-values. The statistical results are presented in Table 2 and Fig. 2.

The coefficient of determination measures the model's predictive power. The model had moderate explanatory power, as the $R^2$ indicated it accounted for 51.6% of the variance in consumers' attitudes toward browsing LORPs and 39.5% and 45.6% of the variance in offline visit and online purchase intentions, respectively. Stone–Geisser's $Q^2$ confirmed the model's ability to predict endogenous variables (attitude: $Q^2 = 0.436$; offline visit intention: $Q^2 = 0.320$; purchase intention = 0.363) (Geisser, 1974).

Building on this analysis, to further ensure the reliability of our statistical approach, a post-hoc power analysis was conducted using G*Power, taking into account our actual sample size of 442. This analysis employed an average effect size of 0.271, derived from the model's $f^2$ values, to reflect the overall explanatory power. With six predictors and an alpha (α) level of 0.05, the analysis suggested that our study achieved a power of 100%. While unusually high, this level of power is attributable to our substantial sample size and the effect size, indicating a very low probability of committing a Type II error and thereby enhancing the credibility of our findings. Additionally, this power level notably exceeds the 80% minimum threshold commonly recommended in social science research, as emphasized by Cohen (1988).

Table 2 shows that H1 and H2 were supported. The effects of attitude toward browsing on offline visit ($\beta = 0.629$, $p = 0.000$) and online purchase intentions ($\beta = 0.676$, $p = 0.000$) were positive and significant. Furthermore, H3, H4, and H5 were supported, as the effects of the non-place-specific motives of convenience- ($\beta = 0.405$, $p = 0.000$), entertainment- ($\beta = 0.344$, $p = 0.000$), and reward-seeking ($\beta = 0.124$, $p = 0.039$) on attitude toward browsing were positive and significant (<0.05). Neither of the place-specific consumer motives, ethical shopping-seeking ($\beta = 0.106$, $p = 0.068$) and place attachment-seeking ($\beta = -0.009$, $p = 0.894$), were significant at the <0.50 level, rejecting H6 and H7.

The $f^2$ values were used to assess effect size (Henseler et al., 2016).

**Table 1**
Psychometric properties.

| | Cronbach's alpha | Composite reliability (rho_c) | AVE | CS | ES | RS | ESS | PAS | ATB | OVI | OPI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Convenience-seeking (CS) | 0.906 | 0.905 | 0.704 | **0.839** | 0.228 | 0.583 | 0.354 | 0.324 | 0.592 | 0.533 | 0.601 |
| Entertainment-seeking (ES) | 0.918 | 0.919 | 0.743 | 0.230 | **0.862** | 0.291 | 0.364 | 0.570 | 0.506 | 0.487 | 0.445 |
| Reward-seeking (RS) | 0.897 | 0.898 | 0.746 | 0.584 | 0.290 | **0.864** | 0.389 | 0.293 | 0.499 | 0.421 | 0.468 |
| Ethical shopping-seeking (ESS) | 0.919 | 0.918 | 0.738 | 0.354 | 0.361 | 0.389 | **0.859** | 0.661 | 0.416 | 0.479 | 0.369 |
| Place attachment-seeking (PAS) | 0.906 | 0.906 | 0.619 | 0.323 | 0.565 | 0.291 | 0.658 | **0.787** | 0.423 | 0.455 | 0.397 |
| Attitude toward browsing (ATB) | 0.919 | 0.920 | 0.741 | 0.590 | 0.505 | 0.500 | 0.415 | 0.423 | **0.861** | 0.628 | 0.675 |
| Offline visit intention (OVI) | 0.882 | 0.882 | 0.651 | 0.533 | 0.487 | 0.421 | 0.479 | 0.456 | 0.629 | **0.807** | 0.618 |
| Online purchase intention (OPI) | 0.941 | 0.940 | 0.797 | 0.603 | 0.445 | 0.467 | 0.369 | 0.399 | 0.676 | 0.616 | **0.893** |

Note. The bold diagonal in bold = square roots of the AVE; below the bold diagonal = the Fornell-Larcker criterion results; above the bold diagonal = heterotrait-monotrait values.

**Table 2**
Results of structural model evaluation.

| | $\beta$ | P | t- statistic | $f^2$ | VIF | Outcome | $Q^2$ | $R^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1. Attitude toward browsing LORPs- > offline visit intention | 0.629 | 0.000 | 15.324 | 0.653 | 1.000 | Supported | | |
| H2. Attitude toward browsing LORPs - > online purchase intention | 0.676 | 0.000 | 20.550 | 0.840 | 1.000 | Supported | | |
| H4. Convenience-seeking - > attitude toward browsing LORPs | 0.405 | 0.000 | 7.216 | 0.214 | 1.586 | Supported | | |
| H3. Entertainment-seeking - > attitude toward browsing LORPs | 0.344 | 0.000 | 7.034 | 0.161 | 1.515 | Supported | | |
| H5. Reward-seeking - > attitude toward browsing LORPs | 0.124 | 0.039 | 2.070 | 0.019 | 1.652 | Supported | | |
| H6. Ethical shopping-seeking- > attitude toward browsing LORPs | 0.106 | 0.068 | 1.823 | 0.012 | 1.921 | Not supported | | |
| H7. Place attachment-seeking - > attitude toward browsing LORPs | –0.009 | 0.894 | 0.134 | 0.000 | 2.288 | Not supported | | |
| Attitude toward browsing LORPs | | | | | | | 0.436 | 0.516 |
| Offline visit intention | | | | | | | 0.320 | 0.395 |
| Online purchase intention | | | | | | | 0.363 | 0.456 |

$\beta$ = path coefficient; $f^2$ = effect size; $Q^2$ = predictive relevance; VIF = variance inflation factor; LORP = local online retail platform.

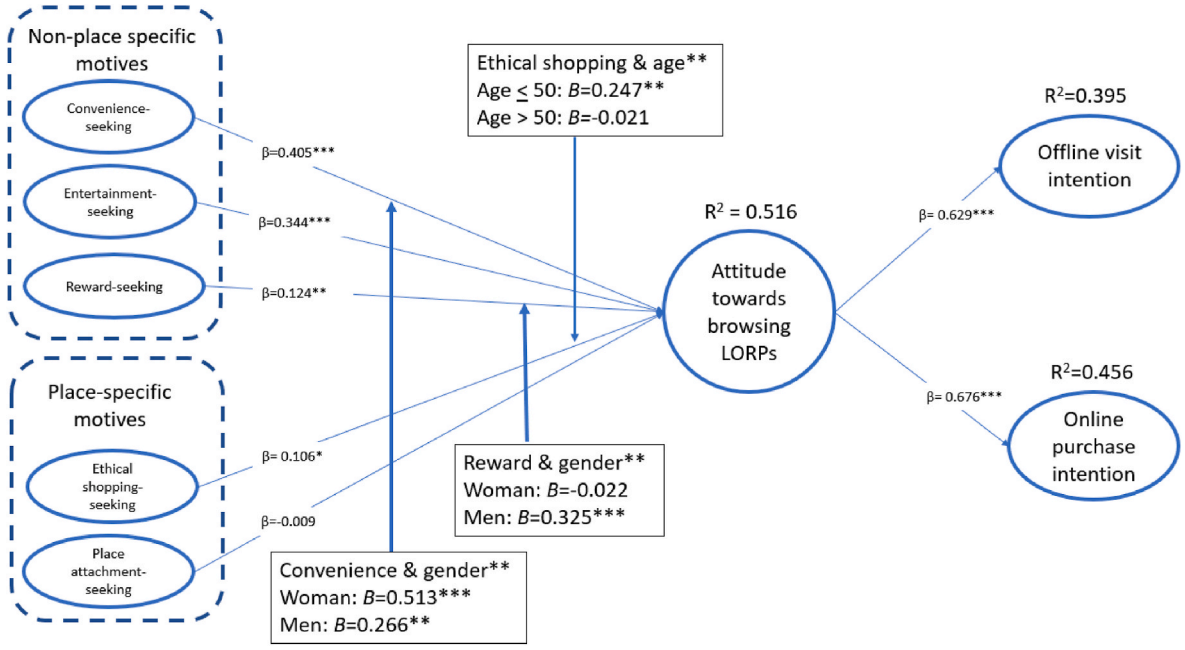


**Fig. 2.** Results of the conceptual model assessment.
Note: ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$.

The results in Table 2 show that the impact of attitude on offline visit and online purchase intentions was strong (>0.35), that on the non-place-specific motives convenience- and entertainment-seeking on attitude toward browsing a LORP was moderate (>0.15), and that of reward-seeking and ethical shopping-seeking on LORP-browsing attitude was small (<0.15). The $f^2$ values showed no effect of place attachment-seeking on attitude toward browsing a LORP.

Lastly, after validating the measurement invariance to ensure that potential differences were not attributable to variations in each group's measurement models, we examined the moderating effects of gender and age toward the retail agglomeration (H8a and H8b) through two consistent bootstrap multigroup analyses (Hair et al., 2019). Regarding gender, the effect of convenience-seeking on LORP-browsing attitude was greater among women ($\beta = 0.513$, $p = 0.000$) than men ($\beta = 0.266$, $p = 0.002$). In contrast, the effect of reward-seeking was more pronounced among men ($\beta = 0.325$, $p = 0.000$) than women ($\beta = -0.022$, $p = 0.782$). We split the dataset by average age (M = 50) and found a significant positive relationship between ethical shopping and attitude toward LORP-browsing among respondents ≤50 years ($\beta = 0.247$, $p = 0.005$). In contrast, we found a non-significant but slightly negative relationship ($\beta = -0.021$, $p = 0.802$) between ethical shopping and LORP-browsing attitude for the older age group. The identified group differences are shown in Fig. 2.

## 5. Discussion of key findings

This study offers novel contributions to the retail marketing literature by focusing on the relationship between consumers' motivations for using LORPs, their attitudes toward browsing LORPs, and their online and offline shopping intentions. Applying UGT, we analyzed responses from 442 Dutch consumers, shifting the research lens from a predominantly supply-side perspective to a lesser-explored, demand-side viewpoint.

First, our research results suggest positive attitudes toward browsing LORPs can foster both online purchase and offline visit intentions (Grewal et al., 2017; Verhoef et al., 2007). It expands upon previous research in the context of online retail platforms, which has focused mostly on the relationship between online platforms and purchase intention (e.g., McLean et al., 2020), and offers a nuanced view of how online platforms can drive online and offline retail behaviors.

Consistent with previous studies on motives for using online retail platforms, our findings underpin the importance of the non-place-specific consumer motives of convenience-, entertainment-, and reward-seeking in shaping consumer attitudes toward browsing LORPs (Betzing et al., 2020; Kleijnen et al., 2007; Lim & Kumar, 2019). Among these, convenience-seeking had the most substantial relationship with LORP-browsing attitude, closely followed by entertainment-seeking. These findings show that LORPs are valued for their transactional

utility and other features such as information provision on retail agglomeration retailers, the variety of products offered, and the events and activities related to the retail agglomeration.

Contrary to our hypotheses, which were informed by previous literature on consumer behavior in local contexts (e.g., van den Berg et al., 2021; Carrington et al., 2010), the current study found no significant influence of ethical shopping-seeking or place attachment-seeking on consumer attitudes toward browsing LORPs in the complete sample. This is particularly surprising, considering the distinctive local characteristics inherent to LORPs (Schade et al., 2018). Consumers may have a limited understanding or recognition of both the localized nature of LORPs (Schade et al., 2018) and the potential benefits they can offer in terms of retail agglomeration viability (van den Berg et al., 2021). These findings indicate the need for a deeper exploration of consumer perceptions and understanding of LORPs.

Delving deeper, our multigroup analysis revealed an interesting age-based distinction between ethical shopping-seeking and attitudes toward browsing LORPs: for respondents under 51 years old, there was a significant positive relationship, whereas this relationship was slightly negative and non-significant for the older group. Prior research has suggested that older consumers may have positive feelings toward LORPs because of their heightened loyalty to local retailers (Noble et al., 2006). However, this might be countered by a lower acceptance of technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Our findings suggest that the latter may overshadow the former for older adults. Nevertheless, further investigations are required to fully understand the precise reasoning behind these results.

Finally, our findings revealed gender differences in how consumer motives shape attitudes toward online browsing. Convenience-seeking showed more prominently among woman, whereas reward-seeking showed more prominently among men. Drawing parallels to the work of Noble et al. (2006), women's preference for browsing and the variety found in local retail spaces might explain why the convenience of browsing via LORPs resonates with them. Similarly, our discovery of reward-seeking's greater significance among men is consistent with their findings concerning men's inclination toward achievement and individualism. In our digital context, men might interpret rewards such as special deals or discounts as accomplishments, thus enhancing their LORP engagement. These insights extend the conceptualization of gender differences by Noble et al. (2006) toward physical retail in the digital sphere.

### 5.1. Practical implications

This study provides valuable insights for LORP operators, local retailers, and retail agglomeration managers. First, considering the strong impact of non-place-specific consumer motives such as convenience- and entertainment-seeking on consumer attitudes toward LORPs, it is crucial that local retailers and retail agglomeration managers collaborate to evaluate their collective resources before adopting a LORP strategy. Competing with well-resourced (inter)national e-commerce platforms requires careful consideration of the ability to create and maintain a compelling and competitive LORP (Hagen et al., 2022b). After a LORP strategy is chosen, our results underline the need to prioritize the non-place-specific consumer motive of convenience-seeking, especially when targeting female consumers, followed by entertainment-seeking. Reward-seeking can be an additional attractive element, especially to appeal to men. Retail agglomeration management should first pursue a deeper understanding of consumers' local needs to better grasp the potential influence of place-specific motives within the LORP context.

Our study demonstrates that positive attitudes toward browsing LORPs can enhance online and offline visit intentions. This highlights the importance of creating and managing LORPs that concentrate on boosting online sales, as well as implementing strategies that encourage offline visits. For example, LORPs could feature promotions or exclusive deals that necessitate in-person pick-ups or redemptions at the retail agglomeration to drive foot traffic. Further, LORPs could serve as information hubs, detailing events or activities at the retail agglomeration, sparking anticipation and giving customers reasons to visit physically (Schade et al., 2018; Silva and Cachinho, 2021). Conversely, experiences within the retail agglomeration can be leveraged to endorse the use of LORPs, for instance, by integrating a collective LORP-powered loyalty program at the points of purchase within the retail agglomeration (Kumar et al., 2017).

Moreover, demographic factors such as gender and age play a critical role in how consumer motives shape attitudes toward LORPs. Hence, these factors should be considered when formulating marketing strategies that target specific consumer segments. For instance, our results suggest that convenience-seeking resonates more with women and reward-seeking with men. Tailoring marketing messages and promotions to reflect these preferences may be effective. Similarly, ethical shopping-seeking emerged as a significant motive among younger consumers, an insight that can be leveraged when choosing target groups.

Finally, in response to the dynamic shifts in the retail landscape, shaped by technological advancements, evolving consumer behaviors, and a profound focus on sustainability, LORPs must be technologically agile. Harnessing the capabilities of AI and machine learning, for example, AI could enhance personalization, efficiency, or user experience on LORPs. Collaborative efforts, through partnerships with local influencers and community groups, can further bolster the platform's trustworthiness and community engagement. Furthermore, LORPs' commitment to supporting local economies and promoting sustainable practices aligns with the priorities of today's environmentally conscious consumer, emphasizing the platform's pivotal role in a sustainable retail future.

### 5.2. Limitations and suggestions for further research

Like all research, our study has limitations that open avenues for future exploration. Given the evolving nature and structural differences of LORPs along limited consumer interactions, we adopted a pre-experimental design method where all respondents were presented with the same hypothetical LORP scenario. This methodological choice of self-reported survey data regarding the hypothetical LORP could have led to subject-expectancy effects, as it may have biased respondents' self-reported behavioral intentions toward socially desirable responses (Betzing et al., 2020). As the field matures and LORPs become more prevalent, future studies might consider a quasi-experimental design that contrasts actual LORPs with hypothetical ones to address these limitations. Moreover, an in-depth exploration of consumer engagement with real-world LORPs could shed light on their influence on the retail agglomeration customer experience, encompassing online and offline interactions.

Another potential avenue for future research is exploring the reasons behind place-specific motives' limited effects on consumer attitudes toward LORPs. While we found that among the two motives, only ethical shopping-seeking exhibited a significant relationship with attitudes toward browsing LORPs, this was exclusively observed in the younger age group. However, the root causes behind these observations remain undefined. Future research could also explore other place-specific motives that were not included in our study. Furthermore, as our results indicated LORPs may stimulate both online purchase and offline visit intentions, future research could explore the dynamics of cannibalism between online and offline retail in the LORP context (Tueanrat et al., 2021). Finally, our sample included only Dutch consumers; therefore, our results may not be generalizable to other countries because of different cultural and situational factors (Zielke et al., 2023). For instance, the Netherlands has historically implemented a restrictive retail policy, prioritized the protection of city centers, and fostered a strong presence of local entrepreneurs. This unique context has implications for consumer and retailer perceptions of LORPs. Therefore,

conducting cross-cultural comparisons could provide valuable insights into how cultural and situational factors influence LORP adoption and effectiveness in different regions.

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## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Daphne Hagen:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Bas Spierings:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. **Jesse Weltevreden:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. **Anne Risselada:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. **Oedzge Atzema:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

## Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the authors used ChatGPT in order to improve language and readability. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

## Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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**Appendix 1 Table 2. Survey instrument constructs, measurement items, and factor loadings**

| Construct and source | Item | Outer loadings | Sample mean | SD | Outer t-statistic |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Convenience-seeking* (Kleijnen et al., 2007) | *I would use the local online retail platform (LORP) because …* | | | | |
| | • it is convenient for me | 0.915 | 0.915 | 0.043 | 21.223 |
| | • it allows me to efficiently manage my time | 0.785 | 0.783 | 0.040 | 19.694 |
| | • it allows me to save time | 0.805 | 0.804 | 0.035 | 22.865 |
| | • it makes tasks (e.g., searching for information or purchasing products) less time-consuming | 0.846 | 0.845 | 0.042 | 20.354 |
| *Entertainment-seeking* (Betzing et al., 2020) | *I would use the LORP to …* | | | | |
| | • play | 0.851 | 0.851 | 0.045 | 18.709 |
| | • pass the time when bored | 0.670 | 0.668 | 0.059 | 11.299 |
| | • be entertained | 0.972 | 0.972 | 0.034 | 28.887 |
| | • relax | 0.924 | 0.923 | 0.037 | 25.050 |
| *Reward-seeking* (Lim and Kumar, 2019) | *I would use the LORP …* | | | | |
| | • because the LORP offers incentives (e.g., special offers, discounts, and promotions) | 0.915 | 0.914 | 0.037 | 25.031 |
| | • to get a reward for my participation | 0.814 | 0.813 | 0.047 | 17.504 |
| | • because the LORP gives me incentives for my participation, such as special offers, discounts, and promotions | 0.860 | 0.860 | 0.038 | 22.732 |
| *Ethical shopping* (Zhang et al., 2020) | *I would use the LORP …* | | | | |
| | • to support the continuity of the retail agglomeration | 0.891 | 0.890 | 0.054 | 16.441 |
| | • to help build a more prosperous retail agglomeration | 0.866 | 0.866 | 0.055 | 15.855 |
| | • because I like to support local retailers | 0.905 | 0.902 | 0.050 | 18.211 |
| | • because supporting the retail agglomeration is important to me | 0.766 | 0.762 | 0.066 | 11.543 |
| *Place attachment* (Boley et al., 2021) | *I would use the LORP because …* | | | | |
| | • this retail agglomeration is very special to me | 0.838 | 0.835 | 0.056 | 14.833 |
| | • I would not substitute this retail agglomeration for any other | 0.737 | 0.734 | 0.080 | 9.207 |
| | • I am very attached to this retail agglomeration | 0.767 | 0.763 | 0.059 | 12.959 |
| | • this retail agglomeration is the best place for the activities I do when I visit a retail agglomeration | 0.809 | 0.805 | 0.064 | 12.645 |
| | • I identify strongly with this retail agglomeration | 0.851 | 0.847 | 0.061 | 13.999 |
| | • no retail agglomeration can compare | 0.709 | 0.705 | 0.075 | 9.455 |
| *Attitude toward browsing* (Muthitcharoen et al., 2011) | • Browsing the LORP is a wise idea | 0.850 | 0.849 | 0.029 | 29.036 |
| | • Browsing the LORP will be pleasant | 0.881 | 0.881 | 0.023 | 38.227 |
| | • Browsing the LORP is a good idea | 0.884 | 0.884 | 0.023 | 38.983 |
| | • Browsing the LORP seems satisfying | 0.827 | 0.827 | 0.029 | 28.829 |
| *Offline visit intention* (Betzing et al., 2020) | *Using the LORP would motivate me to …* | | | | |
| | • discover new shops in this retail agglomeration | 0.742 | 0.740 | 0.049 | 15.283 |
| | • visit these discovered shops | 0.830 | 0.828 | 0.038 | 21.646 |
| | • visit shops I am already familiar with more often | 0.825 | 0.825 | 0.047 | 17.689 |
| | • visit more shops in this retail agglomeration | 0.826 | 0.825 | 0.034 | 24.603 |
| *Online purchase intention* (Muthitcharoen et al., 2011) | • I expect I would make a purchase using the LORP | 0.840 | 0.840 | 0.029 | 28.881 |
| | • I intend to make a purchase using the LORP | 0.963 | 0.963 | 0.025 | 39.163 |
| | • It is likely that I make a purchase using the LORP | 0.918 | 0.917 | 0.022 | 41.456 |
| | • I am certain that I would make a purchase via the LORP | 0.845 | 0.844 | 0.029 | 29.035 |

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