

UNT Global Digital Retailing Research Center & Research Lab

Overview

University of North Texas (UNT), a Carnegie Tier-One Research University, is home to the UNT Global Digital Retailing Research Center & Research Lab (GDRRC) located in the College of Merchandising, Hospitality and Tourism (CMHT). The Center works to advance academic and industry collaborations regarding the current and future states of digital retailing and its impact on the consumer experience. It does this through objective inquiry, interdisciplinary research, collaborative academic – industry partnerships, and by applying research methodologies from the social sciences, arts, and sciences.

The Research Lab

The Center’s Research Lab puts theory into practice through applied research and collaborative academic – industry partnerships. The Research Lab seeks to close gaps in understanding of the consumer journey and the dynamic path to purchase that is blending digital and physical commerce across the retail, hospitality and tourism industries.

Leadership

The Center’s Research Lab is under the leadership of its Director of Research. The current Director of Research is Judith Cardona Forney, Ph.D. in Consumer Sciences and Retailing (Purdue University), and Professor, Department of Merchandising and Digital Retailing at UNT. She has 40 years of university experience as a teacher, scholar and senior administrator at the University of North Texas, Auburn University, and San Francisco State University. Her expertise in the consumer experience bridges consumer decision processes and experiences when purchasing products and services while shopping and traveling. Forney’s research includes collaborative studies completed in the U.S., North America, Middle East, Asia, and South Pacific. Her work is widely published in academic journals and she co-authored the first academic textbook on the consumer experience “Experiential Retailing: Concepts and Strategies that Sell.”

Collaboration

The Research Lab welcomes opportunities to collaborate with industry partners who support the Center’s vision and mission. Engagement with the Research Lab can occur through a variety of research products that are highlighted in a table that follows. Each project is independently discussed with potential partners to determine if its scope and focus is aligned with the Center.

Research Protocol

As a Tier 1 Research University, research efforts at UNT strictly adhere to the ethical and professional standards associated with academic research activities. All research projects are developed in adherence to these benchmarks of excellence and compliance. The Center works collaboratively with the UNT Office of Research and Innovation. Projects involving human subjects undergo individual review through this office. <https://research.unt.edu/>

Affiliated Research Faculty

The Center’s Research Lab consists of a dedicated core of social scientists. These Ph.D. research faculty are passionate about furthering the understanding of digital retailing and consumer experiences in digital and physical environments. Their collective record includes hundreds of refereed journal articles, refereed scholarly presentations, funded research projects, and research mentorship of undergraduate and graduate students. Each scholar offers his or her own unique expertise in content knowledge, research methodologies, and contributions to interdisciplinary and collaborative work.

Research Teams

The Lab offers a unique environment that brings faculty, students, international visiting research scholars and business leaders together as a team to discover and learn. Collectively, it advances the dialogue that speaks to the contemporary and future challenges and opportunities of digital retailing as it is shaped by consumer experiences in digital environments. An important objective of the Research Lab is to engage students as active participants in the research process. A faculty mentor is assigned to each student member of a research team. Students are accountable for their contributions to each research project's goals and its success. UNT's competitive Undergraduate Research Fellow program is one source of student scholars who are passionate about learning the value and application of research to real-world problems. Opportunities also exist to support graduate student research through the Research Lab.

Research Objectives

1. Predict the effect of digital retailing and consumer experiences in digital environments in a transforming *unified retail ecosystem*.⁴
2. Analyze the consumer's journey in the dynamic path to purchase.⁴
3. Generate insights for industry from the consumer's dynamic path to purchase.⁵
4. Summarize the current and future states of digital retailing on consumer experiences in digital environments.⁶
5. Recommend prospects for consumer products and services innovation based on the dynamic path to purchase.⁶

Notes. Objectives linked to Bloom's Revised Cognitive Domain:

Level 4: Analysis⁴

Level 5: Synthesis⁵

Level 6: Evaluation⁶