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AN INVESTIGATION OF CROSS-CHANNEL CONSUMERS' BEHAVIOUR AND RETAIL SALESMAN EFFECTIVENESS - SHOWROOMING EFFECT

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ABSTRACT

Many establishments are now forced to endure the costs of serving as a physical showroom while not benefiting from the final sale due to the increasing commoditization of products and price transparency made possible by online shopping channels. The job of the retail salesperson has changed as customers continue to use retail stores to acquire information and turn to rival channels for purchases. Retailers are left without a clear knowledge of how to manage this transformation in the retailing landscape. In this study, we first define "showrooming" and then look into the experience effects of perceived showrooming at the individual (salesperson) level. We discover negative connections between perceived showrooming and salesperson self-efficacy and performance, which are constructively tempered by cross-selling and coping techniques. . Our findings imply that particular salesperson actions and methods can be used to counteract the detrimental impacts of showrooming. Additionally, store-level exploratory data confirm a negative correlation between performance and perceived showrooming activities. Finally, we analyse the significance of our findings for theory and practise and provide concrete managerial measures to address showrooming.

Keywords - : Showrooming; Self-Efficacy; Job security; Salesperson performance; Self-regulation theory; Multi-channel shopping

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of the internet and the application of technology have altered the way we view the world today. The so-called digital world has taken over our lives and made us its slaves (Coffman & Odlyzko, 2002). Nonetheless, we now use the internet to complete the majority of our tasks because it is the simple route. With a 53.3% Asian market penetration rate, the Internet has quickly grown to be one of the greatest markets in the globe. It is now the primary location for most marketing efforts (Miniwatts Marketing, 2021).

In accordance with the American City Business Journal (2019), the number of small firms using the internet has increased by 46%. Customers also profit from the ease with which they can purchase goods and services, gather information, make comparisons, and find items they enjoy. Consumers can quickly browse the products available, make an order, track the status of their transaction, and pay online while making an online purchase. Internet users profit greatly since it lowers the cost of product searches and allows them to purchase from anywhere without having to go to an actual store (Fernandez, 2020).

The growth of e-commerce has given consumers the option to switch amid the 2 channels that are accessible to them, namely the offline and online channels (Ahuja, 2003). Customers use the retail space to check out products before placing their orders online, which is a major problem for offline merchants (Rapp et al., 2014). Prior to making a decision, customers benefit from using both channels (Kucuk & Maddux, 2010). They test the product in a real store, which the online retailer cannot do, leading to "showrooming" and the loss of potential customers for the offline retailer (Lal & Sarvary, 1999).

Although "showrooming" can be a pain for merchants, it is a promising development from the perspective of consumers. Boyang and Jinwan (2018) described the "showrooming" phenomenon as the practise of a customer who first visits an offline store to physically inspect a product before ultimately purchasing it online. This practise is becoming more prevalent and has drawn significant academic interest.

1.1 SHOWROOMING

The most discussed retail idea is "showrooming". Showrooming is the practise of customers looking for and analysing potential purchases in-person before making an online purchase (Monteleone et al., 2013). The numerous options that merchants provide, which result in the "showrooming" phenomenon, were listed by Monteleone et al. (2013). According to the study's findings, consumers are compelled to purchase at a different retailer by discounts that range from 5% to 15% (Monteleone et al., 2013). The practise of customers viewing things in-person before making an online purchase from an online merchant has been dubbed "showrooming" (Oxford Analytica, 2013). Due to the widespread usage of mobile devices and the simplicity of switching between various retail channels, a phenomenon known as "showrooming" has emerged (Accenture, 2013).

1.2 SHOWROOMING AND CROSS-CHANNEL CONSUMERS

The growth of e-commerce has increased consumer cross-channel behaviour, and as this behaviour becomes the norm, multichannel retailing is becoming a potential topic of research (Boyang and Jinwan, 2018). The crucial factors affecting cross-channel shopper behaviour have been studied by numerous researchers, including Neslin and Shankar (2009), Mehra, Kumary, and Raju (2012), Hamilton and Chernev (2010), focused more on the consumer's multichannel retail behaviour that led to cross-channel shopping and addressed the elements that affected this behaviour. The cost of the goods, perceived security issues, alternatives, convenience of use, and preferences are some of the factors that influence cross-channel purchasing behaviour decisions (Neslin & Shankar , 2009).

Quint et al. (2013) noted that there are two types of research consumers: devoted consumers who use different channels of the same company to search and buy, and competitive consumers who use one channel of one company to search and use a different channel of a rival company to buy. Hence, customers may use Target's physical locations to evaluate merchandise yet make purchases from Amazon's online site if online costs are lower, exhibiting their polygamous behaviour (Neslin & Shankar, 2009).

Consumer perceptions of channel price have an indirect impact on retail channel usage intention, which encourages cross-channel buying (Hamilton & Chernev, 2010). The lower the price of a channel, the more likely customers are to choose that channel during the buying stage since they want

to get the best products for the lowest possible price, especially for price-sensitive customers (Madlberger, 2006). Customers are more likely to showroom a product if they can find it for less money online while they're in the store (Madlberger, 2006).

In the current multichannel retailing environment, "showrooming" behaviour poses significant issues for all merchants. As a result, several retailers have made an effort to take action to solve this cross-channel shopping issue (Quint et al., 2013). Multichannel retailing is currently an exciting field of study as cross-channel shopping becomes the norm (Madlberger, 2006). Several studies have looked at significant factors that drive cross-channel shopping and "showrooming" among consumers.

1.3 SHOWROOMING AND SALESPERSON PERFORMANCE, SELF EFFICACY AND JOB SECURITY

The self-efficacy and performance of the salespeople play a role in whether the retail business succeeds or fails, but "showrooming" has an impact on both of these factors (Rapp et al., 2014). Holton (2012) said that with the spread of technology, consumers today regard retail outlets as nothing more than venues to try things before making a purchase through another channel. It's a stop for them to examine the goods in person before they move on to another channel and make the purchase (Sharma et al., 2000).

'Showrooming' seems to be driving potential customers away from retail establishments without completing their transactions, which results in declining salesperson effectiveness. Because of the rising usage of technology, Spaid & Flint (2014) noted that there has been a significant shift in consumer behaviour, with the latter now preferring to independently obtain information on the product. Verhoef et al. (2007) emphasised the significance of frontline employees' expertise in the showroom but also shed light on the effect of "showrooming" on these frontline employees' sales efforts. Better in-store employee knowledge competency may decrease customers' intention to visit the showroom during the purchase stage because frontline staff with greater knowledge competency can be more successful in meeting customers' demands. Multichannel shoppers have also been found to place greater importance on better employee service quality in physical stores than on the Internet (Havas, 2013). Sharma and Gassenheimer (2009) talked about the job insecurity that a salesperson experiences when they perceive "showrooming," as the salesperson fears losing their jobs when they experience low sales as a result of "showrooming," which further leads to diminishing self-efficacy and lowering their performance.

2 CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The researcher has put out a conceptual model based on the literature to determine the connection between perceived "showrooming" and a salesperson's effectiveness and self-confidence (Spaid & Flint, 2014). Due to the crucial function that retail salespeople play in spreading product knowledge (Weitz & Sujan 1986). In this study, we specifically examine how "showrooming" affects the efficacy and performance of salespeople. "Showrooming" downplays the professional sales function, which also affects how people see their chances of achieving success in sales and other performance goals (Sharma et al., 2010).

When more customers leave the store without buying anything, retail salespeople can anticipate seeing their self-efficacy decline and their performance decline (Spaid & Flint, 2014). Salesperson self-efficacy and performance are negatively correlated with perceived "showrooming" (Rapp et al., 2015). The following hypothesis are proposed and tested:

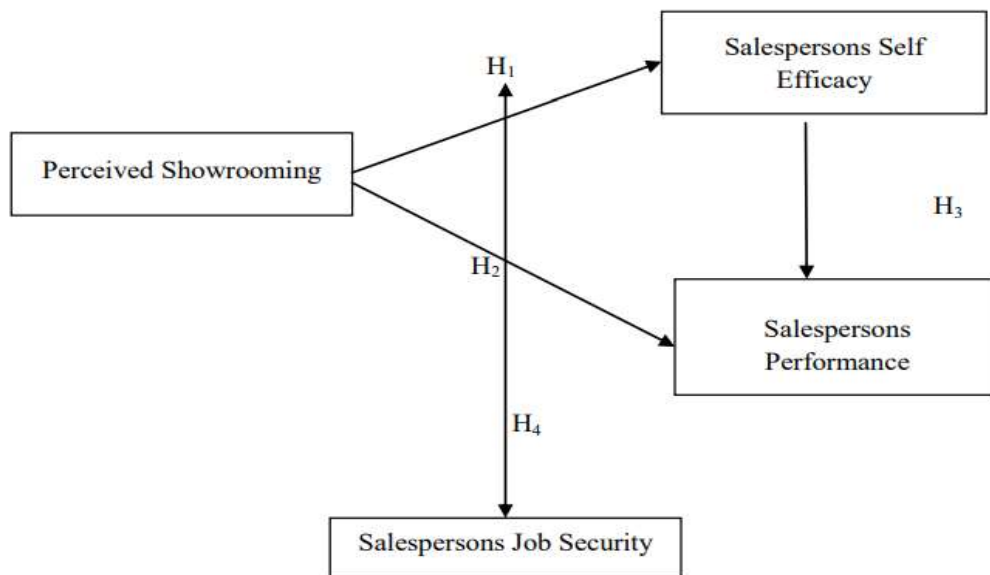**H1:** Perceived 'showrooming' is negatively related to sales person efficacy

H2: Perceived 'showrooming' is negatively related to sales person performance

H3: Salesperson self-efficacy is positively related to sales person performance

H4: Job security to sales person moderates the negative effect of perceived 'showrooming'.

3 RESEARCH MODEL

Figure 1

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
4.1 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The current study's focus was only on certain types of electronic products, like as (Mobile phones, laptops, LEDs, etc). The decision to focus on electronic products in this study was made for two reasons: first, the biggest percentage of products available for online purchasing are electronic items (Mintel, 2015). Second, the nature of electronic devices makes them more likely to be "showroomed," with the largest percentage of shoppers showrooming electronic products (45%) when compared to other products (AIMIA, 2013). Electronic devices are one of the high involvement products, and numerous research have found that they are more likely to be the subject of "showrooming" (Schoenbachler et al. 2002; Spaid & Flint 2014). According to a study by Rapp et al. (2014), electronics are high participation items. The study's geographic focus was only on Chandigarh, Ludhiana, and Ambala. According to a 2021 Deccan Herald report, these cities in the states of Punjab, Haryana, and UT Chandigarh have been designated as e-commerce hotspots. Consumer electronics

have been the main topic of this study. For research and analysis, data is gathered from consumer electronics retail outlets.

4.2 SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

We gathered data from a variety of sources, including electronics store managers and salespeople, for this study. The electronics retail environment that served as the framework for this study includes independently owned specialty running shops that sold a variety of Mobile phones, laptops, LEDs, etc. To manage uncontrollable aspects like the degree of product interaction, we narrowed our attention to a specific retail environment. We collaborated with the trade group for a particular Indian consumer electronics sector to gather survey data from these stores. 297 retailers, or around 83% of the 357 retail establishments in the sector, are represented by this group. We reached out to all 297 merchants in the association, and 158 of those responses were useful (53.2%). . In our initial correspondence, we asked merchants to supply us with the email addresses of their in-store sales representatives and sent surveys to 570 of them, asking them to complete them. After comparing the replies from retail salesperson responders with those from our retailers, we kept 227 responses (a response rate of 39.8%). With t-values ranging from.05 to 1.21, we contrasted early and late responders on all constructs. In this study, there were no differences found between respondents and non-respondents or between early and late respondents.

4.3 INSTRUMENTS

A scale from one (strongly disagree) to five was used to record all measurements (strongly agree). Using the five-item survey found in Table 1, salespeople evaluated how showrooming was perceived by customers. Four items from Jasmand, Blazevic, and de Ruyter (2012) were used to gauge sales person job security. Further, Self-efficacy was indexed using a 5-item measure adopted from Jones (1986). Salesperson performance ratings were provided by retail man-agers, and were assessed using 5-items from Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar (2004).

4.4 SCALE DEVELOPMENT

Because showrooming has not been the subject of a systematic measuring attempt that has been documented in the literature, Nunnally and Churchill (1978) and we designed a parsimonious scale to assess showrooming as evaluated by salespeople. A list of elements reflecting the prospective construct domain was created. As models, we used omni-shopping scales from Sharma and Gassenheimer (2009) and Sharma, Gassenheimer, and Alford (2010). . Then, we looked over and added the actions reported in widely read journalistic sources. A panel of 20 academics, subject-matter experts (SMEs), and consumers reviewed the final list, which included 11 items. They clarified the phrasing. Participants were invited to think about their interactions with retailers and involvement in showrooming. Afterwards, we gave a sample of 119 retail salespeople the 11-item measure (see Table 1) to assess their performance. Participants indicated their agreement or disagreement with the actions described in the items using a 5-point Likert scale, with one representing a severe disagreement and five representing a strong agreement. During factor analysis, four items were eliminated because of inadequate loadings. We eliminated two more criteria that did not clearly mention technology use after revising our definition of showrooming to include it as a necessary element. The final five-item scale yielded a single component with an eigenvalue greater than one and a single factor explained 55% of

the variance. Strong fit statistics and reliability (=.88) were obtained using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

Table 1
Perceived showrooming scale development items (standardized loadings).

Item	Factor loading	Final scale loading
Customers look at the products in our store while using their mobile devices.	.802	.813
Customers use smart phones to examine product UPC codes while in our store.	.732	.766
My customers often use mobile devices to investigate products in the store	.724	.727
Customers use my store as a venue to gather product/service information.	.715	–
Customers visit our store to get more information about our products and services.[a]	.665	–
Customers use technology-enabled devices to find better prices for products online.	.632	.718
Customers using technology devices while still in our store.	.498	.699
Customers hide their mobile devices as I approach them to engage in selling.[b]	.129	–
Store visitors often use me for information about products but claim they need to look them up online before they can make a purchase.[b]	.134	–
Some customers will use their phones to show me the price of our products online.[b]	.212	–
Customers will ask me for information about our products but then look them up online before leaving the store.[b]	.288	–

[a] Items dropped based on refined definition of showrooming.
[b] Items dropped in scale development process.

5. ANALYSIS

We used structural equation modelling (SEM) based on covariance and AMOS 22 to evaluate the assumptions. First, removing the interactions necessary to test hypothesis, we fitted a linear effects model to the proposed model shown in Fig. 1. According to our CFA's results, the fit is good [β = 390.27(190), p .01; CFI =.94; RMSEA =.07; SRMR=.05]. Convergent validity was demonstrated by the fact that all factor loadings were significant (p .01). The composite reliabilities were more than the.60 threshold suggested by Bagozzi and Yi (1988). Further demonstrating construct reliability were coefficient alphas that varied from.75 job security) to.95 (self-efficacy, salesperson performance). Lastly, we used the Fornell and Larcker test to evaluate discriminant validity (1981). The average variance extracted for each construct must be bigger than the squared correlation between any two constructs in order for this method to work, which was the case for all construct pairs (see Table 2).

Table 2
Means, standard deviations and latent correlations.

	Mean	SD	Job Security	Cross-selling	Showrooming	Self-efficacy	Performance
Job Security	5.16	1.03	.50				
Cross-Selling	5.24	1.04	.138*	.60			
Showrooming	5.59	.97	.402**	−.007	.58		
Self-Efficacy	4.06	1.66	.004	.039	−.174**	.82	
Performance	4.18	1.51	.066	.020	−.181**	.254**	.81

Note: Values on the diagonal represent average variance extracted.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

6. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In order to interpret our final hypothesised model, we first looked at the linear effects, including the linear impacts of coping behaviour and cross-selling tactics. This allowed us to assess the structural relationships in our model. This direct effects model had a good fit to the data [$\beta = 346.48(194)$, p .01; CFI =.95; RMSEA =.06; SRMR=.05]. All three of the linear hypotheses were confirmed. In our research, we found that showrooming negatively correlated with salesperson self-efficacy and performance (H1: =.233, p .01). Also, we found that salesperson self-efficacy and performance were positively correlated (H4: =.244, p .01), correlating with previous studies (Stajkovic and Luthans 1998). Results from the hierarchical linear regression are included in Table 3 along with fit statistics, parameter estimates, and findings for the linear model and interaction model. We investigated the showrooming to performance relationship at the store level to further validate the effects of showrooming on performance. We found a significant inverse relationship between showrooming as perceived by the store manager and archival store sales performance (β =.212, t = 2.71, p 01).

We used cross-selling, coping, and mean-centered showrooming to evaluate the interaction hypotheses. Then, we determined two multiplicative interactive terms that took showrooming and the moderators into account, and we fitted a second model that included these product terms as antecedents to salesperson self-efficacy and performance. We defined the link between the observed scores and the corresponding latent variables for each interaction term by placing the measurement error term for the construct at [variance of scale score * (1)]. According to Cortina, Chen, and Dunlap (2001), the formula presented by Bohrnstedt and Marwell was used to determine the reliability of the interaction term (1978).

Table 3
Standardized parameter estimates and fit statistics.

Relationships			Structural equation modeling		Hierarchical linear regression	
			Linear effects model	Interaction effects	Linear effects model	Interaction effects
H1:		Showrooming → salesperson self-efficacy	−.233**	−ᵃ	−.216**	−ᵃ
H2:		Showrooming → salesperson performance	−.217**	−	−.251**	−
H4a:		Showrooming x job security → salesperson self-efficacy		−.020		.003
H4b:		Showrooming x job security │→salesperson performance		.157*		.179**
H3:		Salesperson self-efficacy → salesperson performance	.244**	.242**	.206**	.205**
Chi-square (*df*)			346.48(194)	335.45(190)		
p value			<.01	<.01		
CFI			.95	.96		
RMSEA			.06	.06		
SRMR			.05	.05		

Note: *N* = 227.

* Significant at *p* < .05

** Significant at *p* < .01

ᵃ Linear effects are not interpreted in the presence of a higher order interaction.

ᵇ Higher overall coping score represents greater likelihood of engaging in approach behaviors.

This second model, which included all hypothesised moderating factors in addition to the linear effects, showed an excellent fit [β = 335.45(190), p .01; CFI =.96; RMSEA =.06; SRMR=.05]. Two out of the four predicted interaction effects are supported by our research. Significantly, the results of a chi-square difference test comparing the final model with both significant interactions and the linear effects model showed a substantial improvement above the hypothesised model (2(4) = 11.03, p .05), indicating the significance of keeping the interaction terms.

Table 4 Regression Path Coefficient and its Significance

Construct	Path	Construct	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Results	Hypothesis
Salesperson Performance	< ---	Perceived Showrooming	.298	.047	6.293	***	Significant	Supported
Salesperson Self efficacy	< ---	Perceived Showrooming	.344	.054	6.411	***	Significant	Supported
Job Security	< ---	Perceived Showrooming	.328	.055	5.951	***	Significant	Supported
Salesperson performance	< ---	**Salesperson Self efficacy**	**1.712**	**.168**	**6.971**	***	**Significant**	**Supported**

According to our research, cross-selling significantly improves the association between showrooming and performance, while approach coping significantly improves the relationship between showrooming and self-efficacy (H3: =.181, p .01). We plotted the effects in Figs. 2 and 3 to help with the comprehension of the moderating effects. Salespeople who used approach techniques reported stronger self-efficacy than those who used avoidance tactics as showrooming increased, as seen in Fig. 2. The pattern shown in Fig. 3 is intriguing and has to do with how showrooming and cross-selling interact. Between low and high showrooming, more cross-selling seems to have no impact on performance; yet, under high showrooming, performance suffers dramatically at lower levels of cross-selling. This indicates that when there is a lot of showrooming, cross-selling will have the best performance. Cross-selling did not moderate the association between showrooming and self-efficacy

(H4a: =.020), and approach methods did not moderate the association between showrooming and performance (H3: =.001).
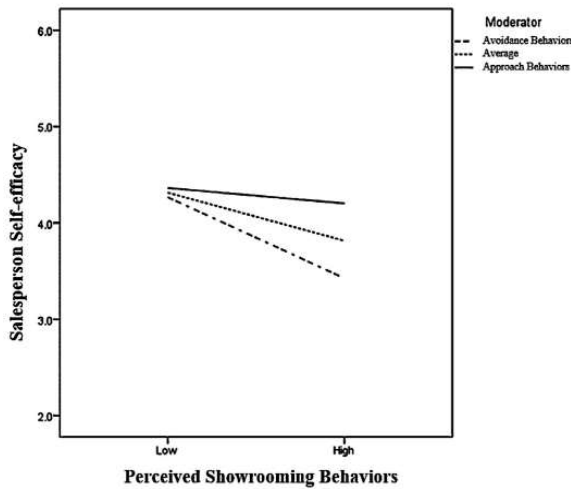

Fig. 2. Interaction of perceived showrooming behaviors by coping behaviors.
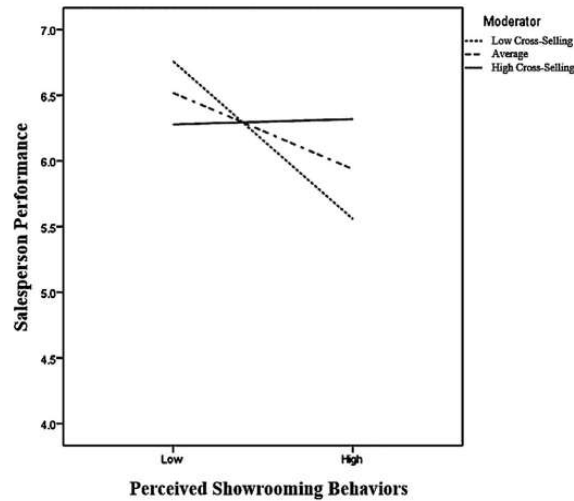

Fig. 3. Interaction of perceived showrooming behaviors by cross-selling strategies.

Lastly, we compared our standardised coefficients with the suggested "cut-off" values of standardised effect sizes to determine the practical importance of our findings (Ferguson 2009). Our study's coefficients, which vary from.03 to.21 and have an average effectsize of.11, show a "practically substantial influence" (Ferguson 2009). In addition, Aguinis et al. (2010, p. 530) mention that practitioners should be included as "participants in a qualitative study" to gain practical significance, which is the same method used in this study.

7. DISCUSSION

The effects of showrooming on electronic retail salespeople are our main concern. The self-efficacy of salespeople, which is crucial for personnel who cross boundaries, is found to be adversely correlated with showrooming (Jaramillo and Mulki 2008). In this situation, salesperson self-efficacy might resemble the personal non-accomplishment feature of Maslach and Jackson's (1981) employee burnout model. When workers believe their best efforts are no longer yielding the desired outcomes, personal non-accomplishment sets in. The recent findings imply that showrooming is connected to a decline in salesperson effectiveness. As consumer increasingly start to perceive retail settings as a backdrop for interacting with - but not necessarily purchasing - things, we believe that salesperson performance will continue to decline. Low self-efficacy, however, is likely to make this link worse. Performance is likely to decline at an even faster rate if salespeople become more and more convinced that their efforts are unlikely to result in desired results (i.e., sales).

Furthermore, Employment security for salespeople moderates the unfavourable impact of perceived "showrooming," which has been tolerated. The perceived "showrooming" has a moderating effect on its detrimental effects on job security. Given that the crucial ratio value is more than 1.96 and the regression path coefficient is significant at the 0.01 level, this is amply demonstrated. Hence, it is agreed that the premise that job stability for salespeople moderates the adverse effects of perceived "showrooming".

8. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study sheds light on how perceived showrooming activity may affect salesperson performance and self-efficacy. We also highlight boundary criteria of these interactions, which are crucial for managers. The current findings provide at least two strategies that can be used to control the expanding showrooming phenomenon and its effects on retail sales. The two strategic solutions (such as coping methods and cross-selling strategies) appear to work differently in this case, which is crucial. Managers may be especially concerned with boosting sales performance as soon as feasible in light of the rising retail revenue losses attributable to showrooming. Managers should promote cross-selling with this focus in order to push bundles and raise the difficulty of creating pricing comparisons. By doing this, showrooming-related performance losses in salespeople can be reduced. Also, this tactic may boost sales of higher profit products. The development of a powerful sales force and the expansion of their organisational network, on the other hand, may be the goal of some retail establishments. In this situation, managers may be more focused on the growth and welfare of their salespeople as well as the importance of their internal structure. These factors emphasise the significance of self-efficacy as well as the possible benefits of training and rewarding approach techniques. Long-term success may be most likely to come from a strategic focus on increasing value in the salesperson-customer contact through a variety of tactics. Academic scholars will need to support the current findings as well as expand the nomological network that the showrooming construct is a part of.

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