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## Electronics and Computer Sales: Brick-and-Mortar Retail Strategies to Increase Revenue

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Thomas J. Watson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

Electronics and Computer Sales: Brick-and-Mortar Retail Strategies to Increase Revenue

by

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MBA, University of Phoenix, 2007

BSBA, California State University, San Marcos, 2003

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2020

## Abstract

The growth of online retailing threatens brick-and-mortar retail revenues. Brick-and-mortar retail leaders who fail to increase revenues risk insolvency. Grounded in the theory of change, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective strategies electronics and computer brick-and-mortar retail leaders use to increase revenue in response to competition from online retailers. The participants comprised 6 electronics and computer brick-and-mortar electronics retail store leaders in San Diego, California, who effectively used strategies to increase revenues. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, company information, financial data, and web site documentation. Inductive thematic analysis was used to analyze the data with 4 themes emerging: returning customers and trust, locality-based marketing, smart devices to shop around by customers, and maintaining stock and customization. A key recommendation is for brick-and-mortar retail leaders to develop website content that drives customer engagement and adopt an influencer strategy to build the brand and increase sales. The implications for positive social change include the potential for brick-and-mortar retail leaders to encourage customer trust, create new jobs, reduce unemployment, and develop new services and strategies to aid local community residents.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my family due to the sacrifices that they have made for my military and civilian work throughout my continuing education. I started this program while I was still on active duty and worked through the coursework when I was not deployed. It has not been an easy road for them. Their constant reminders and pushing, whether positive or negative reinforcement, are what helped me get this done. I would also like to ensure that I dedicate this to the Watson family, as I become the first “Doctor” in our family history. #Pandemic2020

## Acknowledgments

I must acknowledge the dedication and effort of my committee for everything they have done for me to get this far. Without their effort and support, I would not have been able to complete this study. I have received an extraordinary amount of assistance from my chair, Dr. Lisa Cave, as I began work on this study after an extended leave of absence (4 years). She has shown nothing but support for my work through continuous detailed reviews of every subsection, emails, calls, etc... as I have moved through each stage. Without the pushing, support, and the sheer willpower to succeed, I may not have achieved this terminal degree by completing this study in the midst of the pandemic of 2020.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

As consumers continue to shift from one retail channel to another, business leaders must adopt new strategies to reach them. Online retailers clearly benefit from showrooming activities, threatening brick-and-mortar store performance (Gensler, Neslin, & Verhoef, 2017). A majority of consumers use mobile devices to research products while in a brick-and-mortar store, and only half of those mobile device consumers purchased a product online while shopping for the same item in a brick-and-mortar store (Kuksov & Liao, 2018). Leadership must adapt to retail competition. The results of this study may provide retailers with examples of strategies to address competition.

### **Background of the Problem**

The most noticeable difference between online and brick-and-mortar sales is that customers can touch the product before purchasing in a brick-and-mortar store. By contrast, online shoppers have to visit a store before their purchase. Compared to shopping in brick-and-mortar channels, the convenience of online markets yields happier consumers because of the time and effort saved when making purchases in an online environment (Balakrishnan, Sundaresan, & Zhang, 2014). Technology growth continues to increase communication speed, which provides shoppers with faster access online (Li, Lu, & Talebian, 2015). Luo and Sun (2016) showed that the growing trust of online retail stores and changing purchasing behaviors of younger generations leads to a larger share of retail sales online.

Customers tend to examine products in brick-and-mortar stores but purchase them online at a lower price (Kuksov & Liao, 2018). Wang and Goldfarb (2017) said that the

online channel is only complementary to brick-and-mortar retail stores when marketing communication is more informative but an alternative otherwise. The speed and ease of access within the retail marketplace provide retailers with decision points to drive customers to purchase products and services online or in brick-and-mortar retail stores (Cao, 2014).

### **Problem Statement**

Online retailers clearly benefit from showrooming activities, threatening brick-and-mortar store performance (Gensler et al., 2017). Bulsara and Vaghela (2020) expected online sales to grow to \$4.48 trillion by 2021. The general business problem is that brick-and-mortar retailers continue to lose market share to online retailers. The specific business problem is that some brick-and-mortar retail leaders lack effective strategies to increase revenue from electronics and computers because of competition from online retailers.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the effective strategies brick-and-mortar electronics and computer retail leaders use to increase revenue because of competition from online retailers. The population included six brick-and-mortar electronics retail store leaders in San Diego, California. The results of the study may affect positive social change through social and economic advantages for surrounding communities. More profitable business models from new services or approaches could create new jobs for the community.

### **Nature of the Study**

There are three research methodologies: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Yin, 2018). The qualitative approach meets the needs of this study because of its focus on the strategies and experiences of participants. Qualitative researchers use observational research and open-ended interviewing to answer questions about lived experiences (Pastore, 2017). By contrast, quantitative or mixed methods researchers analyze complex hypotheses requiring descriptive statistics (Yin, 2018). It was not necessary to use or collect numerical data to explore the experiences of brick-and-mortar retail electronic store leaders.

Three research designs were considered to study the phenomenon: (a) ethnography, (b) phenomenology, and (c) case study. Ethnography is an observational study technique intended to focus on specific people or cultures (Yin, 2018). The study focus was not on cultural values; therefore, ethnography was not an optimal research design. Phenomenology involves describing a lived phenomenon and assessing the phenomenon through interviews, observations, and documentation of subjects (Alpi & Evans, 2019). Phenomenology was not the appropriate option because this design focuses on the experiences of individuals who have shared similar experiences. A case study design is a detailed approach to explore participants' experiences rather than seeking the lived experiences of participants through phenomenological research, focusing on a specific group of people for generalization, incorporating multiple streams of data combined in creative ways (Alpi & Evans, 2019). A single-case study includes a single person or small group of participants with the researcher as the control (Yin, 2018). A

multiple-case study includes analysis of multiple cases to provide a greater understanding of participants' experiences (Yin, 2018). The multiple-case study was the ideal research design for this study because of the intention to explore multiple brick-and-mortar retailers that sell electronics and computers.

### **Research Question**

What effective strategies do brick-and-mortar retail leaders use to increase revenue from electronics and computer sales despite online competition?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What effective strategies did you use to increase revenues from electronics and computer sales despite online competition?
2. How did you measure the effectiveness of these strategies?
3. What made these strategies more effective than alternative strategies?
4. What challenges did you face when implementing effective strategies to increase revenue from electronics and computer sales despite online competition?
5. How did you address the key challenges when implementing effective strategies?
6. What additional information can you share with me about your effective strategies to increase revenues from electronic and computer sales despite online competition?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Marx and Smelser introduced the theory of social change defined by social conditions and changes in social relations in the late 1800s. Marx and Smelser observed a continuous feedback relationship between economic and social change. New economic changes lead to a push for social change, resulting in new economic systems and social

relations (Marx & Smelser, 1973). This then leads to new economic challenge. In the 1900s, researchers applied this model to organizations and developed a theory of change (ToC), where organizational leaders determine an optimal solution and then model the organization's related variables to recommend a course of action (Zand & Sorensen, 1975). Researchers' definition of the ToC evolved as organizational leaders developed hypotheses of changes while using strategies to achieve their missions. Corporate leaders now use the ToC for changes that will occur during any given timeframe to lead the organization to success.

The study includes the use of the ToC as a lens to gather valuable data from online and brick-and-mortar retailer channels and assess the purchasing behaviors of consumers. This form of research was essential to understand changes in the electronics industry and how leaders can create a competitive advantage through a scaled approach. Dhillon and Vaca (2018) proposed three elements of the ToC: design, implementation and monitoring, and evaluation stages. During the design stage, organizational leaders determine the intervention required and its assessment of the impact on the organization. After the design is complete, corporate leaders implement changes, and stakeholders monitor outcomes expected from new strategies and make adjustments as necessary. Finally, during the evaluation stage, organizational leaders using the ToC evaluate whether forecasted outcomes are achieved (Sridharan, & Nakaima, 2019).

Retailers using the ToC will gain information on how to approach this specific business problem, strategies that will achieve desired results, and how to address consumers' needs in the electronics and computer market. Knowledge of the ToC may



aid in understanding retailers' strategies by examining the design, implementation and monitoring, and evaluation of each approach. Retailers must appropriately strategize their next steps.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Brick-and-mortar store:* A brick-and-mortar store is the standard structural business storefront that consumers visit to make a purchase (Huré, Picot-Coupey, & Piveteau, 2016).

*Make-to-order:* In a make-to-order system, manufacturers produce goods after receipt of the orders (Li et al., 2015).

*Make-to-stock:* In a make-to-stock system, expected demand provides retailers product quantity to stock before an order is received (Li et al., 2015).

*Online retail store:* An online retail store is a virtual storefront that presents information about the store's products via the Internet. Customers may visit the web site to research products or make a purchase (Luo & Sun, 2016).

*Showrooming:* Showrooming is the use of a store to touch and feel products before making a purchase (Kuksov & Liao, 2018).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

Factors not tested, validated, or controlled by the researcher are assumptions (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). There are two assumptions in this proposal. It was assumed each participant provided unbiased and factual responses to the interview

questions. It was also assumed that information regarding observed consumer purchasing behaviors provided by interview participants was factual.

### **Limitations**

Limitations include anything that may limit the breadth of research beyond the control of the researcher and potentially affect the validity of the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Participant choice methodology in the study may limit transference of findings to other studies. Participant perspectives may not be generalizable for a broader market. Participants may provide biased responses to interview questions required for data collection.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are boundaries or limits of research based on decisions of the researcher (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The population under study is Southern California electronics retail stores. The study was delimited to electronics and computers stores in Southern California. The findings of the study are limited in scope and scale for adaptation to other areas because of differences in demographics and market competition.

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Contribution to Business Practice**

Capabilities of the Internet and sophistication of online retailers to compete with brick-and-mortar retailers offer consumers options when purchasing electronics. This research could be of value to electronics and computer retailers because of the potential to provide examples of strategies successfully used by participants that complement or counter consumer purchasing behaviors. Wang and Goldfarb (2017) proposed that online

sales rise when a brick-and-mortar store opens in a specific region. Guo and Lai (2019) posited that online retailers serve business segments not serviced by physical retailers. Technological services such as the Internet and mobile devices and changing consumer behaviors provide business leaders opportunities to meet changing demand.

Business leaders may benefit by focusing on their environment and adjusting for long-term survivability. Business leaders may need to change to meet the demands of the marketplace to challenge business competition. The development of new services or strategies such as personal shoppers, enhanced member programs, or curbside pickup from phone or online orders may continue to expand or morph into the next service standard. Interpreted data from this analysis could provide electronics retail leaders factual information upon which to base marketing strategies and increase revenue and provide customers with new, more efficient, and cost-effective shopping. The goal of this study was to explore the strategies retail business leaders use to increase revenue despite online competition with consumers purchasing electronics and computers. This analysis and interpretation of data could enhance retail business leaders' understanding of strategies and common themes among retailers.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Society experiences change in terms of cultural values and behaviors over time. Researchers continuously measure behavior data to discover the norms of specific communities or industries. This research could provide implications for positive social change through the creation of new jobs and additional state and local tax revenues from

more profitable business models. State and local governments could use additional tax revenue for social programs.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of this study was to provide insight into the strategies brick-and-mortar retail electronics store leaders use to increase revenue despite online competition. Consumers have more decision points for every purchase to buy in an online retail marketplace because of the growth of the Internet and its increasing power in the retail market. Retailers may benefit from understanding strategies used to compete in the market and develop new products, services, and competitive prices. As consumers continue to shift from one purchase channel to another, business leaders must revise retail strategies to acquire new sales and retain current customers. Technology growth continues to increase communication speed, allowing consumers faster access online (Li et al., 2015). The goal of this literature review was to explore relevant information from the Internet, make comparisons between brick-and-mortar and online retail strategies, investigate consumer behaviors, and review change management methodologies.

The research incorporated 118 references. One hundred and one (85.59%) of those references are peer-reviewed and published between 2016 and 2020, which is within 5 years of my expected graduation date. The literature review incorporated 99 references. Eighty-six (86.87%) of those references are peer-reviewed and published between 2016 and 2020, which is within 5 years of my expected graduation date. Research included using keywords and phrases in ABI/INFORM, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Camp Pendleton Library, CINAHL Plus,

EBSCOHost, Google Scholar, InfoTrac, Oceanside Public Library ProQuest, SAGE Journals, and the Walden University' Library. The literature was organized into themes to better frame the strategies and environment within retail and online markets. These themes are: (a) the ToC, (b) retail strategies, (c) environment of retail marketing strategy, (d) multichannel retailers in brick-and-mortar and online environments, (e) omnichannel strategy for retailers, (f) competitive strategies for brick-and-mortar retailers, (g) Internet distribution impact on brick-and-mortar sales, and (h) showrooming. Keywords or phrases used in searches were *theory of change*, *theory of change model*, *change theory*, *distribution*, *retail sales*, *electronics sales*, *brick-and-mortar strategy*, *traditional strategy*, *online strategy*, *Internet strategy*, *retail strategy*, *online strategy*, *online retail strategy*, *online versus brick-and-mortar*, *online versus traditional*, *traditional retail strategy*, *omnichannel*, *omnichannel retail*, *omnichannel strategy*, *showrooming*, *showroom retail*, *showroom strategy*, *showrooming strategy*, *showrooming retail strategy*, *touch and feel retail*, *touch and feel sales*, and *try in store and buy online*.

The conceptual framework for this study is the ToC. Organizational leaders use this theory for changes that occur during any given timeframe to lead the organization to success. The study will include the use of the ToC as the conceptual framework to explore the concept of change and how retail leaders can develop and implement their strategies properly to ensure they can maintain competition in today's multichannel marketplace. The implications for positive social change include social and economic advantages for surrounding communities through the creation of new jobs and providing state and local governments additional tax revenues from more profitable business

models. Social factors including lifestyle, community, and socioeconomic status may influence business decisions in terms of store locations, stock, and online services in order to build new and stronger relationships with customers. State and local governments may also use additional tax revenue on social programs.

### **Theory of Change**

Marx and Smelser first introduced a theory of social change defined by social conditions and changes in social relations in the late 1800s. They observed continuous feedback between economic and social change. New economic changes lead to a push for social change resulting in a new economic system and social relations (Marx & Smelser, 1973). The new economic system and social relations then lead to new economic challenges (Marx & Smelser, 1973). In this model, economic and social change are inextricably linked.

In the 1900s, researchers related the theory of a continuous societal link between economic and social change to organizations. Organization- related variables constantly interact to recommend a course of action based on optimal solutions. In 1990, the ToC was further revised by community change methodologists. Weiss (1995) developed the ToC as a model to plan community change strategies based on interventions and their expected outcomes.

The ToC's continued evolution over time came as society adapted to new technologies and corporate leadership-developed strategies to achieve their missions. In the 2000s, researchers used the ToC as a model to analyze how change takes place or may take place and how to address changes appropriately. The ToC adds to strategy

analysis by describing causal assumptions behind the need for change and what has to happen to realize the change (Sridharan & Nakaima, 2019). Theories of change depict how an organizational leader expects to achieve its mission at the organizational level (Dhillon & Vaca, 2018). Researchers use the ToC to analyze and develop strategies to adjust for change in the retail market.

No organization is immune to change in any environment, whether the change comes in the form of technology, competition, or demographics (Mayne, 2017).

Leadership must adapt their strategies to embrace and direct change in corporate strategy to combat effects on businesses (Hemmerich, Van Voorhis, & Wiley, 2016).

Organizational leadership benefits from using the ToC framework to test new strategies or adjust current strategies and activities by ensuring they will achieve corporate goals.

Organizational leaders use the ToC to provide a shared vision of organizational goals for leadership and staff to achieve corporate missions. Organizational leaders use this theory for changes that will occur during any given timeframe to lead the organization to success (Van Tulder & Keen, 2018). Organizational leaders in the electronics and computer retail industry can explore and epitomize transformation using the ToC model to adapt to change in the retail market.

Dhillon and Vaca (2018) proposed three stages of the ToC: (a) design, (b) implementation and monitoring, and (c) evaluation stages. During the design stage, leadership determines the required intervention and its assessment of the impact on the organization (Freer & Lemire, 2019). After the design is complete, organizational leaders implement changes and stakeholders monitor expected outcomes and make adjustments

as necessary (Dhillon & Vaca, 2018). Finally, during the evaluation stage, organizational leaders use the ToC to evaluate whether or not outcomes were achieved (Freer & Lemire, 2019). Retailers using the ToC framework could gain information on how to approach this specific business problem, strategies that will achieve desired results, and how to address consumers' needs in the electronics and computer marketplace. This form of research is vital to understand changes in the electronics industry, how corporate leaders can create a competitive advantage, and decision-making processes through a scaled approach.

The development of the ToC is a complex and analytical process. Corporate leadership and staff use the ToC model to review literature, history, and internal and external documentation (Hemmerich et al., 2016). Retailers in the same markets may develop different hypotheses regarding how changes will occur and how to approach change for the future (Deboeck, Garber, Kouros, Little, & Nicholson, 2015). Multiple retailers may approach technological change differently, but most meet the corporation's long- or short-term goals by learning new strategies to manage relationships (Blustein, Kenny, Autin, & Duffy, 2019). One retailer may adjust to the latest technology by reducing prices online to avoid accepting the latest technology and meet its corporate goal of increasing revenue and increasing brand recognition. Another retailer may create a more robust logistics network to embrace new technological changes. Staffs rely on the ToC as a guide to engage in their work and cultivate potential new projects within the scope of the corporate mission (Hemmerich et al., 2016). A robust logistics model could



increase company overhead initially but prove to be profitable as they pass through savings to their customers, thereby meeting their goal to increase revenue.

The ToC often presents conservative planning inversely because it develops an impetus for a team or group to make efforts to achieve their target goals or desired effect by working backward on outcome paths rather than engaging in traditional forward-oriented thinking (Sinha, 2018). The ToC improves upon assessment theory through practice in the field of business in the marketing of products in the global business world (Hemmerich et al., 2016). ToC practitioners draw their understanding of two streams of evolution and social program exercise, which entail informed social practice and evaluation (Deboeck et al., 2015). Concerning the developmental sector, the idea grew as an outcome of conventional logic planning models that include the logical outline tactic developed in the 1970s. The ToC may help electronics and computer leaders with a model to analyze changing demand and achieve steady growth.

Verrinder et al. (2018) stated that the ToC is used to identify and test causal mechanisms of investments and assumptions during the path from activities to desired impacts. The ToC is a model of how change is expected to happen or how change has happened. It can also be used for improvement of strategies and implementation plans. Dhillon and Vaca (2018) said that the ToC model is better suited for large institutions where have adequate resources to implement techniques. The ToC may aid business leaders to transform entire organizations by implementing change through sustainable strategies. Organizations within the electronics and computer industry may appropriately design and implement sustainable strategies using the ToC framework.

Accordingly, a wide range of stakeholders must be involved in ToC development in a bid to make outcomes more comprehensive. Montague (2019) said various obstacles hinder the development of ToC in an organizational setting. Barriers include the responsibility of end-users in the process of developing the ToC and the level to which power assessment affects ToC style. Deboeck et al. (2015) said that some problems arise from a misperception about how best to develop ToC and the honesty and transparency of the process. Analysis of the electronics and computer retail landscape using ToC with the assistance of stakeholders engaged in the market may aid in developing strategic change.

Mayne said that terms applied in describing these models varied considerably. Models may include logic concept, action theory, program theory, results chain, implementation theory, and outcome pathway with no settlement on meanings and terms (Deboeck et al., 2015).. Development and analysis of ToC models provides opportunities to apply the ToC in the electronics and computer retail environment.

Blustein et al. (2019) said that in terms of appreciating how and if an intervention is operational, experts and practitioners should understand how the events lead to anticipated outcomes. Mayne (2015) said that the development of the impact pathway is the first step towards advancing the ToC. As a result, the impact pathway that is an outcome of logic or chain model is not a ToC. Freer and Lemire (2019) said that shifts in behavior are the result of motivation and control of conduct. Motivation comes from the results of prospects and needs, while control of conduct arises from capabilities and opportunities (Mayne, 2017). The ToC adds to impact pathways by showing links between causal assumptions and pathways during electronics and computer strategy

interventions. Each impact pathway should be detailed enough to be implementable by the team, ensuring the change is implemented successfully.

Mayne (2015) that establishing a ToC requires the identification of a degree of control that an individual has or might possess over the casual link assumptions. The proposed application of nested theories of change (NToC) allows users to use concepts together to bring about anticipated outcomes in the electronics and computer retail market.

Non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders applied the NToC, especially in addressing nutritional problems in the community. Organizational leaders use the NToC as a way to provide a simplified analysis of the ToC into something more practical and understandable by stakeholders and participants (Mayne, 2015). Mayne (2015) said that organizational leaders use ToC for time-dependent projects developed for diverse purposes to acknowledge nonlinearities and risks. Corporate leaders who want to obtain a strong ToC should test initial versions against assumptions and logic as well as evaluations that support the ToC (Dhillon & Vaca, 2018). Mayne (2015) concluded that credible models of transformation are vital for conducting theory-based assessments. Models of change generically illustrated in the application provide usefulness for various reasons, including well-defined causal link assumptions. Aromatario et al. (2019) found that outcome pathways were an essential component in planning and evaluating the ToC as part of the process of development. The development of assumptions to support pathway development aids users in the electronics and computer retail industry to develop successful outcomes.

Montague (2019) investigated the development of the ToC to support change by reviewing existing knowledge and its application in the field. Verrinder et al. (2018) defined ToC as a concept that organizational leaders use to outline long-term objectives and then plot backward to recognize alterations required to transpire beforehand. Mayne (2015) and Verrinder et al. acknowledged ToC to be both a product and a process. Concerning process, researchers recommend utilizing the ToC in a session with a group of experts and participants steered by a capable facilitator (Verrinder et al., 2018). As a product of the process, the framework documents a model of change that shows why and how a team of stakeholders will reach a particular goal (Montague, 2019). Verrinder et al. acknowledged the outcomes pathway to be the basic structure of ToC. The outcomes pathway forms a set of graphically described building units connected and ordered through a causal link. Assumptions are essential and resourceful facets of ToC; although, it is a challenging task for stakeholders to make assumptions inherent in a program (Verrinder et al., 2018). ToC includes a framework for users to facilitate change using stakeholders, analysis, assumptions, and produce strategies to address changes in the retail industry.

A functional theory offers the specificity and logic required for ongoing learning, making the theory correct, eventually. Verrinder et al. (2018) findings were similar to those of Mayne (2015) and offered the same understanding regarding ToC in initiating change in society. Mayne and Verrinder et al. focused on how ToC moves towards implementing, monitoring, and evaluating change based on practice in the field. Mayne emphasized understanding the concept from a general perspective and its usefulness in

the community. Verrinder et al. concluded that a useful ToC is not inevitably exclusively correct. Grounded experience, changing backgrounds, and learning convey unceasing refinement to bring stakeholders closer to the conceptual model that brings forth positive change in the electronics and computer retail industry. The ToC provides a framework that could aid retailers in formulating strategies to address change and increase revenue for brick-and-mortar stores.

### **Retail Strategy**

Li et al. (2015) provided research on pricing, an assortment of products, and delivery time as variables for decision in the retail marketplace. Many studies focus on specific products, supply chains, or brick-and-mortar or online strategies only. Han, Fu, Cao, and Luo (2018) stated that dual-channel (online and brick-and-mortar) retailers tend to outperform online or brick-and-mortar retail strategies. The manufacturers' rapid introduction of products creates challenges and opportunities for brick-and-mortar retailers (Balakrishnan et al., 2014). With the growth of the Internet and mobile devices, manufacturers' can insert products to the market rapidly and provide customers with information at their fingertips. Retail strategy directly links consumers with retailers, and the retailer with the best strategy earns greater market share within the electronics and computer industry.

Li et al. (2015) stated that brick-and-mortar retailers usually adopt a make-to-stock strategy as consumers expect to obtain the product right away when they visit a store. Meanwhile, an online retailer can use a make-to-order strategy to avoid inventory costs (Li et al., 2015). The avoidance of inventory costs forms a perspective that online

retailers have a critical advantage over brick-and-mortar retailers; however, delivery time can create a decision point for consumers. Technology intensifies competition within the retail industry (Fan, Luo, & Zhang, 2016). Online store leaders may more efficiently and effectively fulfill consumer needs using technology (Fan et al., 2016). An online store retailer provides customers with the ability to complete most, if not all, of their purchasing tasks rapidly from the comfort of their own home (Fan et al., 2016). Consumers have a dependency upon psychological importance with the feeling of being a thrifty and smart shopper (Binkley & Chen, 2016). This psychological dependence compels consumers to look for a reason to come into a brick-and-mortar retail store to research products and get the best price and method of delivery (Hart, 2017). Online retailers and same-day delivery services revolutionized the shopping experience (Alexander & Muhlebach, 2019). Some brick-and-mortar retailers use smaller stores, where consumers can try on or test-drive a product and for delivery to their home, as part of their strategy (Hart, 2017). Technology incessantly advances change in the electronics and computer retail landscape and continuously requires changes in strategy to meet the needs of the customer.

Brick-and-mortar retailers tailor their marketing mix using the 4Ps: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion (McCarthy, 1960). Products, retailers must determine what customers want or needs, as well as an acceptable price they will pay for the product (Hindi, Schafheutle, & Jacobs, 2019). Customers want to find the product that will fulfill their needs from a convenient place at a price that provides value (Binkley & Chen, 2016). Each organizational leader must appeal to the customers using promotions through

sales, social media, television advertising, or other tools (Binkley & Chen, 2016).

Marketing teams continuously reevaluate their marketing mix to ensure they adequately address the challenges in the electronics and computer retail industry.

With the competition and change in the retail marketplace, Shinde (2017) recommended using three additional P's: people, physical evidence, and process. Every person a customer meets builds an impression of the organization (Hindi et al., 2019). Retailers reduce uncertainty by providing physical evidence allowing consumers to see what they are purchasing (Hindi et al., 2019). Retailers also align the processes of retail delivery for the products or services offered with the behaviors of those delivering those products or services (Hindi et al., 2019). Retailers must have the right people managing the process from arrival in-store or online to product delivery, as well as some form of physical evidence such as a receipt with additional information, warranty, certificate, service agreement, or even a unique experience (Shinde, 2017). The 7P's of product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence, and process provide electronics and computer retailers additional areas to analyze to adjust marketing practice.

Even after 20 years of rapid growth, online retail sales account for a relatively small portion of total retail sales (Carr, 2016). At the same time, mobile devices give retailers more ways to communicate with and influence customers, even when shopping in stores (Haan, Kannan, Verhoef, & Wiesel, 2018). Mobile devices have led to multichannel strategies, blending online with brick-and-mortar retail strategies (Alexander & Muhlebach, 2019). Customers use mobile devices to order an item and have it shipped to them or reserved for pick-up at a brick-and-mortar store (Vojtovič,

Valentinas, & Valentas, 2016). When retailers use multiple channels as part of their retail sales policy, they can combine or separate alternative channels to acquire products (Cao, 2014). Multichannel retail shopping is not new, but the Internet's importance generates new relevance and interest concerning the impact of multichannel systems on retailers (Cao, 2014). Consumer shopping behaviors in a multichannel environment provide opportunities for electronics and computer retailers to adjust marketing and sales strategies.

Online shopping outcomes depend on the research and the characteristics of the product purchased (Mallapragada, Chandukala, & Liu, 2016). Some consumers conduct research online and purchase offline (ROPO), while others practice reverse ROPO (Awdziej & Tkaczyk, 2018). Li et al. (2015) showed consumers shopping in a brick-and-mortar store do not attempt to purchase an alternative item if their first choice is out of stock. While, online retailers usually meet consumer's demands for their first choice (Li et al., 2015). The profit differential between the two models depends upon the specific distribution strategies (Mallapragada et al., 2016). The retail environment has plenty of options for consumers and information is readily available on the Internet. The behaviors of consumers in the electronics and computer retail market direct additional research and change to address new strategies to retain and acquire revenue.

### **Environment of Retail Marketing Strategy**

Cross-channel rivalry exists in almost every product category. This rivalry is further heightened by the Internet (Zhang, Li, Lai, & Leung, 2018). Product end-users have an option of purchasing from conventional vendors instead of online (Balakrishnan



et al., 2014). Although brick-and-mortar retailers outsell Internet sellers in almost every product group, investigations on Internet commerce neglect the cross-channel rivalry in the electronics and computer industry supporting the need for further research.

To compete with brick-and-mortar retailers, most Internet retailers have established delivery hubs across the United States to speed up distribution of their merchandise to consumers. Additionally, e-commerce retailers provide free or discounted shipping costs to attract customers unwilling to pay charges associated with shipping from local stores. Previous researchers conducting empirical investigations found that e-commerce marketing can improve the welfare of consumers as well as the profits of a firm by allowing a more comprehensive selection of products (Jin, Li, & Cheng, 2018). In local marketplaces where local charges and sales tax rates are extraordinarily high, consumer demand through the online channel may be more pronounced. Electronics and computer retailers operating in multiple channels may have lower costs to improve market share in the industry. Online retailers have advantages because of lower overhead costs passed through to consumers as discounted or free shipping costs. Brick-and-mortar retailers may also create advantages by establishing an online presence.

Retailers primarily operate in two networks the catalog (telephone and mail orders) and Internet (website). Both channels have nearly the same contribution to the firm's income (Mallapragada et al., 2016). Balakrishnan et al. acknowledged that an essential feature in retailing is offering a similar selection of commodities and prices through catalog and Internet channels. Maintaining similar products and pricing in each sales channel eases logistics and ordering processes for retailers. Spaid and Flint (2014)

found that electronics market retailers improve the welfare of customers through price reductions, enhanced product variety, and lower search costs. Mallapragada et al. (2016) found that the lowered cost of searching products via the Internet reduces the delivery costs and alleviates competition between brick-and-mortar and Internet retailers. Product search and selection costs shape the rivalry between brick-and-mortar and online electronics retailers and underscore the economic importance of technology in the electronics and computer retail industry.

Consumers' high search costs derive competition between brick-and-mortar and Internet retailers (Spaid & Flint, 2014). Technology and the Internet considerably decreases search costs by enabling consumers the ability to rapidly explore everyday items and realize niche goods (Haan et al., 2018). Consequently, when customers buy niche products, they do not perceive brick-and-mortar stores as a better substitute for online retailers (Haan et al., 2018). Similarly, Mathipoorani and Suguna (2016) showed how retailers displayed increased flexibility operating and increasing competition by putting up physical stores. However, Balakrishnan et al. (2014) found when matching data on local market structures for brick-and-mortar retail stores to customer demands through both retail channels, that consumers use different sales channels at various stages of the shopping process. The rivalry between electronics and computer retailers intensifies when customers buy popular goods with low search costs in both brick-and-mortar and Internet retailers making marketing and inventory strategies particularly important. Understanding the environment of retail marketing strategy, the use of the

Internet, inventory and distribution, and online retail competition provide insights on new strategies to increase profits for brick-and-mortar retailers.

### **Multichannel Retailers in Brick-and-Mortar and Online Environments**

Retailers should consider the importance of multi-channel strategies. Customers accessibility to the Internet persistently grows and online sales are approximately \$227 billion (Mallapragada et al., 2016), highlighting the impact and importance of selling online. Luo and Sun (2016) showed that the growing trust of online retail stores and the changing purchasing behaviors of younger generations leads to a larger share of retail sales online. Multi-channel retailers continue to expand in the electronics and computer retail market, but there are associated risks with multi-channel strategies.

Rewards associated with a multi-channel approach do not come without costs (Yrjölä, Saarijärvi, & Nummela, 2018). Hidden expenditures linked to fulfillment and customer returns are one of the problems known to direct marketers. These issues become acute in product categories where consumers must physically see to test the goods to ascertain how well they fit their perceptions and needs. Mallapragada et al. (2016) acknowledged that online retailers could not control the relevance of the buying atmosphere in stores. Retailers may adequately stock a range of products or provide more illustrations of models to ensure customers find the correct products. Hiring qualified salespersons to support consumers to research and inspect products decreases the probability of a mismatch and increases the consumer's connection to the product (Mathipoorani & Suguna, 2016). Capacity to reduce the possibility of returning a product online is limited; retailers possess this ability in their physical stores by capitalizing on

suitable sales support and allowing customers to test products before they purchase.

When multi-channel retailers operate in various environments customers have options to showroom, multiple paths for purchase, or multiple paths for returns in the electronics and computer retail industry.

Reverse logistics, the operational and transactional challenges of returning online purchases, developed from the increased use of Internet transactions (Jocovski, Arvidsson, Miragliotta, Ghezzi, & Mangiaracina, 2019). The retail sector uses third-party vendors or additional support personnel to manage reverse logistics undertakings. Many retailers also operate online channels besides their brick-and-mortar retail stores and have multiple methods to handle these transactions (Jocovski et al., 2019). Mathipoorani and Suguna (2016) concluded that brick-and-mortar retailers have more advantages compared to their counterparts who use only the online channel to reach their buyers. However, online retailers may also improve their competitive edge in the electronics and computer industry by establishing local stores to reduce consumers costs of product return.

More consumers prefer to buy goods in conventional retail stores because they interact with sales associates and physically interact with the products (Arora, Singha, & Sahney, 2017). Mathipoorani and Suguna (2016) focused on product revenue associated with approaches of multi-channel retailers in brick-and-mortar and Internet retail. The findings were similar to Arora et al. (2017), who showed that Internet distribution had a positive influence on sales realized by brick-and-mortar retailers in the modern business world. However, Arora et al. focused on various motives that drive a brick-and-mortar retailer's choice of entering the online marketplace to expand its portion of the market.

The strategies that retailers use to connect with their customers in the ever-changing electronics and computer retail landscape influences purchasing decisions.

### **Omnichannel Strategies for Retailers**

The critical difference between multi-channel and omni-channel strategies is the focus on customers. Customers seamlessly transition between channels within an omni-channel system (Rouquet, Henriquez, & Paché, 2018). Retailers using multi-channel strategies focus on brands, while omni-channel retailers focus and adapt to customers behaviors (Holzapfel, Hübner, & Wollenburg, 2016b). Engaging customers through effective omni-channel strategies allows retailers to remain competitive (Chan, Chong, Lee, & Thadani, 2019). Omni-channel strategies are not without challenges as customers spend more time using mobile devices to conduct searches and make purchases (Karjaluo & Tyrväinen, 2019). Creating a seamless sales strategy that adjusts to a customer's behavior remains challenging but effective for electronics and computer retailers.

Retail customers expect to use multiple sales channels interchangeably and simultaneously whenever they are shopping (Huré et al., 2016). Many retailers have adopted omni-channel retail strategies and improved channel integration making better fulfillment options available for online purchases (Jin et al., 2018). Wang and Goldfarb (2017) said that the online channel is only complementary to brick-and-mortar retail stores when marketing communication is more informative, otherwise online channels are considered an alternative. While distribution concepts vary amongst retailers, many retailers have begun operations in both brick-and-mortar and online (Holzapfel et al.,

2016b). The creation of synergy amongst simultaneous channels through adaptive distribution networks is an omni-channel strategy that retailers continue to refine to stay competitive in the retail industry.

Since 2010, consumers have grown accustomed to simultaneously using brick-and-mortar stores, catalogs, Internet, mobile devices, and social media rather than merely one or two channels (Kang, 2018). Efficient and effective distribution networks are vital for any retailer but likely more critical for omni-channel retailers. The two most common omni-channel scenarios are buying online and pick up in-store and buy in-store and ship direct (Boone, Murfield, Rutner, & Thomas, 2017). Customers may visit a brick-and-mortar store to view a product but may choose to purchase the product in store and have it delivered to their residence. Customers may also decide to travel to a brick-and-mortar store only to pick up a product ordered online. Multi-channel retailers tend to consist of detached channels developed without coordination in response to new technology and growth of the Internet (Bourlakis, Mena, Saghiri, & Wilding, 2017). When used appropriately, the electronics and computer retailers include Internet and social media platforms as part of an omni-channel retail strategy.

Omni-channel retailers seek to provide adequate coordination of technologies in all channels to provide seamless and reliable services for customers (Picot-Coupey, Huré, Piveteau, Towers, & Kotzab, 2016). As brick-and-mortar retailers continue to combine with online retailers, the fulfillment process is not as transparent (Holzapfel, Hübner, & Kuhn, 2016a). Fulfillment methods must also be adequate, whether stocking products in a store or delivering products within a reasonable time. Omni-channel strategies are

successful when adaptive systems that refine logistics, supply chains, fulfillment, and seamless technological advances focus on consumer needs (Boone et al., 2017).

Successfully designing and implementing an omni-channel strategy is a priority for retail managers (Picot-Coupey et al., 2016). Electronics and computer retailers with continually expanding networks of sales channels face complex fulfillment decisions that require constant strategy reevaluation.

### **Competitive Strategies for Brick-and-Mortar Retailers**

Competition exists, although the buying experience of consumers differs between brick-and-mortar electronics retailers and multi-channel retailers (Luna-Nevarez & Rejon-Guardia, 2017). The rivalry between retail stores operating across channels has heightened with the development of multi-channel vending (Fan, Lin, Tai, & Wang, 2015). Showrooming affects sales in brick-and-mortar stores without an online presence. Brick-and-mortar retailers feel threatened by showrooming (Dahana, Shin, & Katsumata, 2018). Brick-and-mortar retailers have both short-term and long-term techniques available to counteract showrooming. Retailers choose a short-term technique when they want to respond quickly, adopting approaches that encompass minimal transformations in their business practices. Retailers select long-term approaches when they have a lengthier period to make considerable changes in their business procedures. Ultimately, retailers must address customer pricing research, whether short- or long-term, to gain and retain market share in the electronics and computer retail market.

Pricing in online retailing is substantially lower than in brick-and-mortar stores. Li, Li, Tayi, and Cheng (2019) noted that global consumers prefer to purchase electronics

and computers online. Moreover, there is significant price dispersion in the fees displayed by an online store. Fan et al. (2015) demonstrated that online price dispersion is lower if a buyer considers the transaction charges rather than the price posted. Price matching encompasses a positive obligation to match the price of any competitor in the market. Fan et al. found that electronic retailing increases the profit of brick-and-mortar retailers only when the number of consumers who exploit price matching is considerably large. When customers do not participate in showrooming, the customer decision is either buying directly from brick-and-mortar retailers or an online store (Awdziej & Tkaczyk, 2018). Luna-Nevarez and Rejon-Guardia (2017) concluded that customers evaluate goods in brick-and-mortar stores and buy them through an online channel in cases when online fees are relatively low. Competitive pricing strategies are crucial in the electronics and computer retail market because of lower overhead costs online than in a brick-and-mortar store that translate to lower prices for customers.

The short- and long-term approaches proposed by Cao (2014) intend to aid in advancing the profits of brick-and-mortar electronics retailers when consumers participate in showrooming. Webber, Sausen, Basso, and Laimer (2018) stated that remodeling retail stores to improve lighting and feel increased performance over stores that did not remodel. Remodeling concepts are not new, but a new look may aid brick-and-mortar stores to acquire customers that planned to only touch and feel a product in a brick-and-mortar store. Arora et al.'s (2017) findings were similar to those obtained by Fan et al., who found that the Internet improves competition in the retailing market. However, Fan et al. (2015) emphasized various causes that motivate a conventional



vendor's choice of entering the online marketplace while Luna-Nevarez and Rejon-Guardia focused on electronic retailing to analyze the nature of competition in retail marketing. While there are many causes of consumer decisions to purchase online or in a brick-and-mortar store, the retailer's short- and long-term strategies require continual analysis and refinement to increase revenue.

### **Internet Distribution Impact on Brick-and-Mortar Sales**

Arora et al. (2017) examined the effect of Internet distribution on brick-and-mortar sales in the current business environment. Arora et al. presented existing data about the impact of product distribution using the Internet among brick-and-mortar retailers. Brick-and-mortar retailers tend to locate in suburban and sparsely populated regions, making it harder for them to adequately compete for clients with high transportation costs (Arora et al., 2017). Cao (2014) noted retailers who sell online demonstrate a successful approach to overcome location barriers and augment sales. The Internet discontinues the link between a brick-and-mortar retailer's distance from a consumer and provides them with the ability to purchase without having to leave the comfort of their home. Retailers via the Internet are able to reach consumers anywhere in the world and through distribution nodes receive and deliver orders to customer's homes.

Inventory management is a challenge for retailers in each channel they manage (Rouquet et al., 2018). Within each channel retailers must be able to communicate stock and stock objectives appropriately to avoid missing opportunities. Approximately 1,500 brick-and-mortar retailers across the United States also sell online via their company websites (Arora et al., 2017). Most households visit brick-and-mortar retailers

approximately two times a week; however, they only shop online every 6 weeks (Arora et al., 2017). Accurately managing stock to meet changing demand online allows retailers to continue to attract customers. Brick-and-mortar retailers can use the Internet to control their prices and enjoy a wide range of goods to support a variety of consumers that they were unlikely to attract otherwise.

The inception of online stores resulted in customer support, particularly for those customers located far from local stores. Arora et al. (2017) also acknowledged that retailers attract customers by circulating coupons. Availability of coupons influences a consumer's desire to purchase specific products, such as groceries. Retailers of electronics and computer stores may attract new customers for specific products by circulating coupons.

Mobile devices and the Internet have increased retail sales in 79,770 customer sessions out of 594,472 sessions. However, these conversions cannibalized brick-and-mortar sales. Distribution methods through operation on the Internet may conversely affect brick-and-mortar sales, but providing multiple options may retain customers with an appropriate pricing strategy.

Brick-and-mortar retailers who sell online substantially enlarge their sales with minimal cannibalization (Arora & Sahney, 2018). Customers located in places further from brick-and-mortar stores save time and transportation costs by shopping online. The findings were similar to those of Balakrishnan et al. (2014), who found that online retail sales have enhanced commodity sales to consumers in certain localities. However, Arora and Sahney focused on several causes that motivate a conventional vendor's choice of

entering the online marketplace. Simultaneously, Balakrishnan et al. emphasized improved sales from the perspective of the customer's distance to the stores. Retail strategies must consider location, distance from brick-and-mortar stores, shipping costs, and time costs that affect consumer behaviors.

Mathipoorani and Suguna (2016) examined the approaches used by retailers in India. They focused on various strategies such as target marketing, pricing, promoting, distributing, retaining, penetrating, customer relationships, and corporate social relationships. Marketers must develop their segment of the market and marketing strategy to meet the needs of potential customers. Mathipoorani and Suguna noted that organizational flexibility is a vital aspect of influencing marketing changes with minimal resistance. Corporate leaders who adopt relevant marketing approaches that focus on establishing open communication between brand building and advertisement can maintain long term consumers in the electronics and computer industry. Brick-and-mortar retailers may be more successful with flexible approaches for distribution networks, marketing mix, and development of strategies to maintain and retain customers.

Retailers who accept the challenges associated with the marketing strategies in local stores can sustain and realize their goals in the modern retailing environment (Shinde, 2017). The findings were similar to those of Luna-Nevarez and Rejon-Guardia (2017), who examined the competitive approaches for brick-and-mortar stores in countering showrooming. Luna-Nevarez and Rejon-Guardia analyzed how the electronic marketing approach may counter showrooming while Mathipoorani and Suguna emphasized retailers who added value to products by adopting basic marketing strategies.

Mathipoorani and Suguna found that retailers focused on strategies that included pricing, corporate social responsibility, retention, promotion, penetration, customer relationship, and distribution. Modernization and continuous refinement of electronics and computer retail strategies may retain or acquire consumers seeking added value.

### **Showrooming**

With the growth of technology and availability of information, customers tend to visit brick-and-mortar retail stores to physically interact with products before buying them online. Showrooming has grown more prevalent because of the increasing capabilities of mobile devices. A survey of showrooming specified that most of the respondents practice or practiced showrooming (Kuksov & Liao, 2018). Over half of the respondents stated they used a mobile device to research a product while they were in a store, and a small portion of the respondents indicated they purchased their product online while in a brick-and-mortar retail store (Kuksov & Liao, 2018). These results indicated that brick-and-mortar retailers using traditional strategies are in danger of losing a significant portion of their customer base if retailers do not adjust to modern marketing strategies.

Brick-and-mortar retailers are adding an online presence, while an increasing number of pure online retailers are opening physical stores or showrooms (Tayi, Li, & Zhang, 2019). Consumers prefer to physically interact with products in a brick-and-mortar store while they are researching a purchase and making a purchase decision. Consumers consider decisions include where to purchase the item based on many options including return policies, brand names, affirmation of quality, availability, shipping

times, need, and sale prices (Tayi et al., 2019). Brick-and-mortar retailers must exploit showrooming behavior, or retailers may suffer losses to the online market (Gu, & Tayi, 2017). A drawback to purchasing online is that consumers may regret a purchase when the product is not as expected (Chen, Ge, Gou, & Zhang, 2018). Further, brick-and-mortar retailers tend to have the specific products that consumers can physically interact with before making their purchases (Dahana et al., 2018). Traditional retailers must consider showrooming behavior when developing business strategies to avoid the revenue risk associated with showrooming behavior.

Many online retailers do not have the additional costs of maintaining brick-and-mortar stores and often offer fewer products or services to reduce costs (Gu & Tayi, 2017). Making purchases in brick-and-mortar stores also includes additional costs such as, the cost of traveling to the store, time and effort of visiting a physical store, opportunity cost, and for some, the dislike of traditional shopping experiences (Burns, Gupta, Bihn, & Hutchins, 2018). Consumers make purchase decisions by weighing the risks and costs of the different channels (Chen et al., 2018). Taking advantage of customers' interest in specific products while they are showrooming exploits the opportunity for a customer to walk away with the purchase versus purchasing online from another retailer.

Retail stores must carry inventory to execute sales, while online retailers may or may not require the same inventory depending on their supply chains (Burns et al., 2018). Uncertainties might arise with the retailer or any party involved in the supply chain that causes faulty products, delays, missing shipments, or payment settlement problems

(Astari, Huliselan, & Jong, 2017). Kazancoglu and Aydin (2018) stated that study participants did not perceive a retailer's inability to deliver to a selected address as a problem as long as they could reserve the product at the store. Brick-and-mortar and online sales channels benefit from a successful supply chain with lower costs to manufacturers, retailers, and consumers.

Corporate leaders in the supply chain strive to improve their chain, but these changes can cause disruptions (Holzapfel et al., 2016b). Chen et al. (2018) stated that manufacturers and consumers are better off with online retailers since the manufacturer's cost is the same in both brick-and-mortar and online channels. Price competition between online retailers and brick-and-mortar retailers generally shows that online retailers have lower prices. Online shopping typically has the advantage of convenience, as well as higher risks, since the transaction does not happen in person (Cheng, Li, Shum, & Zhang, 2019). The pricing schemes offered through the different channels vary when it comes to the cost of goods sold because of different overhead costs. Electronics and computer retailers who have a streamlined supply chain may lower their costs and increase their opportunities.

Consumers physically interact with products in a brick-and-mortar retail store while researching alternative products and prices using their tablets or smartphones (Kumar, Anand, & Song, 2017). Mobile devices continue to expand the online environment and vastly outnumber the human population (Marmol & Fernandez, 2019). Consumers using their tablets and smartphones have the ability to research and access information about products and prices even while shopping at a brick-and-mortar retailer

and sampling a product (Dahana et al., 2018). Consumers are growing more comfortable with shopping online (Cao, 2014). Customers conducting research while showrooming using mobile devices create a risk to traditional retailers who must focus on the strengths of brick-and-mortar stores and develop counter-strategies to reduce revenue loss.

Arora et al. (2017) identified four benefits of shopping in brick-and-mortar retail stores. Some of these benefits include employee assistance, social interaction, information availability, and the ability to physically interact with a product (Arora et al., 2017). When consumers personally test products, the process can be more informative than investigating a product online (Fan et al., 2015). Online retailers are starting to open brick-and-mortar retail stores in shopping centers to demonstrate their products to those who want to physically test products before they buy (Alexander & Muhlebach, 2019). Despite thorough efforts in the online marketplace, the benefits of shopping in a brick-and-mortar retail store are less limited than online markets (Fan et al., 2015). Many products are presented best in a brick-and-mortar store where consumers can test items and communicate with store employees about the product to glean additional information not available online (Arora & Sahney, 2018). Brick-and-mortar electronics and computer retailers must accept showrooming but develop strategies to prevent losing sales to online competitors.

The literature review included over 65 sources on ToC, retail strategies, environment of retail marketing strategies, multi-channel retailers in brick-and-mortar and online environments, omni-channel strategies for retailers, competitive strategies for brick-and-mortar retailers, Internet distribution impact on brick-and-mortar sales, and

showrooming. The review of the literature is necessary to support the evaluation of the research question: What strategies do brick-and-mortar retail leaders use to increase revenue from electronics and computer sales despite online competition?

### **Transition**

In Section 1, I described the background of the study, problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, research question, interview questions, conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, the significance of the study, and a review of the professional and academic literature. In Section 2, I revisited the purpose statement, identified the role of the researcher, acknowledged research participants, provided a detailed investigation of the research method and design, identified the population and sampling, addressed ethical considerations, identified the instrument for data collection and organization, and determined dependability, credibility, transferability, and validity of the data. In Section 3, I presented the findings through their application to professional practice, discussed the implications for social change, and provided useful recommendations for current practice and future research.



## Section 2: The Project

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies brick-and-mortar electronics retail leaders use to increase revenue despite competition from online retailers. The targeted population consisted of five brick-and-mortar electronics retail store leaders in San Diego County, California. The results of the study could affect social change through social and economic advantages for surrounding communities. Social factors influence business decisions regarding store locations, stock, and online services as well as building new and stronger relationships with customers and developing more profitable business models. More profitable business models due to new services or approaches may create new jobs for the community.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In this qualitative multiple-case study, I was the primary research instrument. Alpi and Evans (2019) stated that each researcher is an instrument when using structured or unstructured interviews for data collection. The researcher is responsible for the data collection process, including data collection, organization, and analysis (Alpi & Evans, 2019). The establishment of a data collection process and analysis of data to achieve data saturation is imperative in any study (Walsh & Brinker, 2019). Personal bias from experience as a business major and a small business owner did not influence this study. Due to my educational background, military service, civilian employment, and entrepreneurial efforts, retail strategies are a primary interest. Shoppers of electronics and computer products seek the best value but not necessarily the best price for each product

(Gu & Tayi, 2017). Detailed shoppers understand and integrate into their purchase decisions timelines to acquire each product both online or from a brick-and-mortar store (Gu & Tayi, 2017). My intent was to mitigate bias by remaining open-minded and looking at each data point clearly to remain impartial regarding specific outcomes.

Open-ended interview questions increase the richness and reliability of collected data (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The use of an interview protocol aids researchers in terms of serving as ethical interviewers when meeting with participants. Researchers include within the interview protocol what they will say before, during, and after the interview. Interviewers use the interview protocol to ensure that specific information is collected and every participant is asked the same questions (Vasileiou et al., 2018). I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to guide the interview process.

The interview process began by building rapport with participants to put them at ease, earn trust, and maintaining a secure environment. Arsel (2017) said a reliable interview protocol builds rapport and ensures participant privacy. Discussions included data collection procedures and informed consent with each participant; interviews began after participants' consent. After each interview, participants were provided the next steps in the process and thanked for their participation. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1979) , stated that the principles of (a) respect of persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice are three principles relevant to the ethics of research involving human subjects. I followed the Belmont Report's three primary principles to protect the rights of participants, respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

## **Participants**

Participant eligibility criteria ensured each participant was knowledgeable about the research topic, served in a role that could effect change, and had requisite experience. Rook (2018) said that the selection of study participants is essential when researching any phenomenon that occurs between businesses and consumers in different locations and at different times. Participants must be selected using specific criteria for the study (Rook, 2018). The selection criteria for this study consists of participants who (a) are electronics retail store leaders, (b) can affect changes in strategy, (c) had experience using successful strategies to increase retail revenue, and (d) had some experience in omnichannel retail sales.

Potential participants were screened over the phone to ensure they met selection criteria. I reviewed the informed consent form with each participant via email to receive their consent. Coordination with potential participants started building the foundation of our relationship. Interviews were scheduled when each participant could be available in a private space and I could be in my home office to record the interview. Upon confirmation of each participant's consent from the emailed informed consent form, I conducted each recorded interview. Each participant should have experienced a sense of trust and collaboration participating in the study. I communicated goals, sought truthful responses, valued participants' perspectives, was organized and on time, and dressed appropriately for each interview.

Clear communication with electronics retail store leaders was crucial to start building rapport with participants. An approved informed consent form was presented to

every potential participant so that each participant could make informed and voluntary decisions to participate in the study. I answered any questions participants had regarding the study to aid in building collaborative relationships with each participant. Use of the interview protocol (see Appendix A) helped to ensure that meetings are scheduled, guidelines were established, and participant consent was obtained. Each interview was thoroughly transcribed, and a one-page summary was provided to each participant to review and approve for accuracy. This study's protocols incorporated Belmont Report principles.

## **Research Method and Design**

### **Research Method**

There are three research methodologies: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Pastore, 2017). The qualitative approach was the appropriate method to explore strategies brick-and-mortar electronics and computer retail leaders use to increase revenue despite competition from online retailers. This study focused on strategic challenges, effectiveness, and information regarding revenue generation and which strategies tend to prove more valuable in the industry. Qualitative researchers study *how*, *why*, and *what* of phenomena (Yin, 2018). Qualitative researchers use observational research and open-ended interviewing to answer questions about lived experiences (Pastore, 2017).

By contrast, quantitative researchers use experimental, quasi-experimental, and correlational designs to test theoretical concepts (Yin, 2018). Researchers also use the mixed methods design to analyze complex hypotheses by combining both qualitative and

quantitative methods (Pastore, 2017). Numerical data was not used or collected, as this was not necessary to explore the effective strategies of brick-and-mortar retail electronic store leaders, so quantitative and mixed methods were not appropriate for the study.

### **Research Design**

Three research designs were considered for this qualitative study: (a) ethnography, (b) phenomenology, and (c) case study. Each research design offered unique techniques that could provide valuable insight into research. The case study design was the most appropriate research design to answer the research question because this approach is useful for in-depth research of brick-and-mortar retail strategies.

Ethnography is an observational study technique which involves focusing on specific people or cultures (Yin, 2018). Ethnographic researchers immerse themselves in a social setting for observational fieldwork (Atherton et al., 2017). Ethnography was not an optimal research design method to answer the research question because the cultural values of electronics retailers are not relevant to the research question.

Phenomenological researchers intend to describe a lived phenomenon and assess the phenomenon through interviews, observations, and documentation of participants (Alpi & Evans, 2019). Participants are not restricted to specific responses since phenomenological researchers promote variability (Tedder & Smith, 2018). Participants have the opportunity to reveal lived experiences of a phenomenon by responding to questions in as much detail as they desire (Tedder & Smith, 2018). Phenomenology was not the appropriate option because there was no intention to focus on individuals shared experiences.

The case study method was the ideal research design for this study. Researchers use a case study design to explore, describe, and analyze how individuals make meaning of their life experiences regarding specific phenomena (Alpi & Evans, 2019). A case study is more complex than phenomenological research; the researcher uses information gathered over a sustained time and often incorporates multiple streams of data in creative ways (Alpi & Evans, 2019). A single-case study is a single subject design that may include one retail chain (Yin, 2018). A multiple-case study is a multiple subject design that may consist of various retail chains with the same purpose (Yin, 2018). The multiple-case study method was the ideal research design to answer the research question because the intention was to explore multiple brick-and-mortar retailers that sell electronics and computers.

Researchers achieve data saturation when no new data, themes, and codes emerge from the data (Vasileiou et al., 2018). This study includes semistructured interviews from six participants and member checking, to ensure data quality and data saturation. Morse (2015) suggested data saturation ensures replication in categories, verifies redundancy, and confirms comprehension and completeness. I intended to interview five participants; however, I achieved data saturation after six participants, I expanded the sample size until no new themes emerged from participants' responses. In qualitative research, data saturation occurs when no new data, themes, or codes emerge (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

### **Population and Sampling**

Participants are selected using specific criteria for the study (Rook, 2018). This study used purposeful sampling to gather participant assessments and opinions from

leaders within the electronics retail industry identified through specified selection criteria with knowledge on the topic of this study. The selection criteria for this study consisted of participants who (a) were electronics retail store leaders, (b) affected strategy changes, (c) had experience using successful strategies to increase retail revenue, and (d) had some experience in omni-channel retail sales.

Each participant provided email or verbal consent to participate in the study. Arsel (2017) recommended that researchers obtain written cooperation for participants to protect their privacy. I contacted electronics and computer store leaders from multiple organizations operating in San Diego County, California through LinkedIn groups, LinkedIn postings, and via direct calling. I followed up with participants who met selection criteria through email using the approved informed consent form to obtain consent. Each potential participant was screened to meet specified selection criteria before scheduling interviews. Upon meeting selection criteria and electing to participate in the study, each participant confirmed via email or verbally agreed to the informed consent prior to the interview being scheduled.

Potential participants received the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved informed consent form. The informed consent included appropriate information for participants to make an informed and voluntary decision to participate in the study. Upon participant consent, interviews were scheduled following the interview protocol (see Appendix A). As stated in the interview protocol, participants had the option to participate in a face-to-face interview in a secure location with a quiet atmosphere or via a telephone interview. I (a) asked the participants open-ended semistructured questions in

an audio-recorded interview, (b) transcribed responses, and (c) submitted a one-page interpreted summary for participants to review and approve.

In qualitative research, data saturation occurs when no new data, themes, or codes emerge from participant responses (Vasileiou et al., 2018). This study included semistructured interviews of six participants and member checking to ensure data quality and data saturation. Researchers use data saturation to develop redundancy, ensure replication in categories, and guarantee comprehension and completeness (Morse, 2015). I intended to interview five participants; however, I needed to interview six participants to achieve data saturation.

### **Ethical Research**

Informed consent is a procedure researchers use to protect participants and ensure voluntary permission avoiding the possibility of coercion (Arsel, 2017). Researchers must understand the importance of communicating the risks and benefits to participants (Damus, Douglas, Estrella-luna, Nusbaum, & Paasche-Orlow, 2017). The Belmont Report outlines a protocol of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Department of Health, Education, & Welfare, 1979). I relied on the protocol throughout this study to ensure the ethical protection of participants. Participants indicated their understanding and acceptance of the purpose and procedures of the study by confirming consent to participate in the study.

Arsel (2017) recommended researchers obtain written cooperation from participants and support free and unforced participation with the option to withdraw without penalty. Participants had the opportunity to decide about participating in the



study without coercion. Before confirming consent, participants reviewed the approved informed consent, which included their right to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview process without penalty.

Some researchers use cash, debit cards, and gift cards as incentives for participants (Brown et al., 2018). In this study, there were no paid incentives. To ensure confidentiality, Allen and Wiles (2016) recommended the use of codes for participants. Each participant was assigned a code, P1, P2, etc., to further protect their identity.

The IRB provides parameters for ethical research and institutional ethical oversight (Parker, 2018). This study includes the IRB required policies and procedures for ethical research. Universities that have an IRB, performing research before IRB approval is a violation of federal law (Parker, 2018). Before contacting potential participants, I obtained IRB approval (IRB approval number: 03-27-20-0321033).

I complied with ethical procedures for all data collection and storage. All transcribed data, interpretations, and notes from the interviews are stored on a password-encrypted external hard drive and will be maintained for 5 years beyond Chief Academic Officer (CAO) approval. De Massis and Kotlar (2014) noted that researchers maintain data for 5 years after completion of a study. All hard copy materials will be maintained electronically with transcribed data stored in a locked file cabinet. I will destroy all electronic and hard copy data 5 years after CAO approval. The summarized findings of the study will be disseminated to each participant after CAO approval to increase the awareness of the effective strategies retailers use to increase revenue despite competition from online retailers.

## **Data Collection Instruments**

Yin (2018) identified the researcher as the primary instrument in the data collection process. I was the primary instrument who collected and analyzed data for this study. This multiple-case study included conducting and recording semistructured interviews and followed the interview protocol (see Appendix A) to explore strategies retail electronics store leaders can use to increase revenue despite online competition. Alpi and Evans (2019) identified interviews as a primary data source for a case study. Semistructured interviews with electronics and computer retail store leaders provided the primary qualitative data for this study.

Participants reviewed interview summaries to member check for errors and changes to improve the reliability and validity of the interview data. Member checking includes returning results to participants to verify accuracy (Naidu & Prose, 2018). Morse (2015) asserted that qualitative researchers use member checking of interpreted data to provide participants an opportunity to correct errors and dispute interpretations. Data triangulation involves comparing data from different sources and perspectives (Tan, 2019). Researchers use data triangulation and member checking to strengthen the reliability and validity of the study results (Morse, 2015). In this study data triangulation included market data, organizational documents, and member checking of interviews.

## **Data Collection Technique**

Semistructured interviews were the primary data collection method for this study. Yin (2018) stated that semistructured interviews are the principal data collection

technique for qualitative research. In this study, I conducted semistructured interviews following the interview protocol checklist (see Appendix A).

After IRB approval, I contacted electronics and computer store leaders who met the selection criteria by phone and followed up with an official email request. The email included the consent form with information about the interview, incentives, withdrawal, and destruction of data. Arsel (2017) recommended that researchers obtain written cooperation from participants to protect their privacy. Upon confirming consent to participate in the study, each interview was scheduled and completed.

Two recording devices were used to record each interview. A digital recorder was the primary recording device and a secondary digital recorder with an external microphone was a backup. I had familiarity and fluidity with the use of both devices and conducted thorough testing prior to each interview.

Upon completion of each interview, transcripts and one-page summaries were prepared for member checking to improve the reliability and validity of the semistructured interviews. De Massis and Kotlar (2014) stated that researchers should integrate transcription and member checking to help reduce subjectivity and improve validity. Morse (2015) asserted that qualitative researchers use member checking to provide participants an opportunity to correct errors and dispute interpretations. Yin (2018) stated that triangulation and member checking of transcribed data from interviews strengthens the reliability and validity of the study. Participants received an email with a summary of the interview transcript to verify that the data presented was an accurate reflection of their meanings or if they would like to add content or modify their responses. Participants had

7 days to review and provide feedback or concurrence. I sent an additional request for feedback to participants who did not return their summarized interview transcript within 7 days. All participants confirmed the summarized interpretation of the interviews.

There are advantages and disadvantages to conducting interviews. A major advantage is that researchers can authenticate the accuracy of the data collected through member checking (Naidu & Prose, 2018). Additional advantages of interviews are control, convenience, lower cost, and acceptability (Alpi & Evans, 2019). De Massis and Kotlar (2014) stated that a major disadvantage of interviews is that the process is extremely time-consuming. Time is a factor not easily mitigated but careful monitoring of timelines and adjustments of schedules to meet requirements is extremely important for a successful case study. Another disadvantage of interviews is researchers are susceptible to bias (Morse, 2015). Maintaining objective oversight to mitigate bias regarding data collection and its interpretation was vital to this study.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Researchers protect participants by using secure data storage with a password protected external hard drive, removing personally identifiable information, and identifying codes for individuals, places, and organizations (Kutrovátz, 2017). I ensured participant confidentiality by using a secure electronic library on a secure hard drive with password protection and a primary folder labeled *Doctoral Study* known only to myself. The doctoral study folder included subfolders for every category of information. Participants had a code name labeled subfolder. Participants' folders contain the

associated audio interview, transcribed information, summaries, and additional triangulating data.

I used NVivo data analysis software to organize, manage, and analyze data. Brooker et al. (2017) claimed that researchers use NVivo to thoroughly analyze data. Researchers use NVivo to enhance the quality and validity of the data analysis (Bosselman, Kim, & Tang, 2018). An *Interviews* folder contains a spreadsheet with the consolidated de-identified information for every participant. I will maintain the password-protected electronic library for 5 years after CAO approval, after which I will destroy all electronic data by deletion and overwriting three times, followed by reformatting the hard drive.

### **Data Analysis**

In this study, analysis of the collected data included development of themes using NVivo software, and connecting themes to the conceptual framework. ToC is a model of how change happens or how change has happened (Yang et al., 2018). No organization is immune to change in any environment, whether the change comes in the form of technology, competition, or demographics (Mayne, 2017). Company leaders must adapt their strategies to embrace change and direct change in corporate strategy to combat the effects on the business (Hemmerich et al., 2016).

Qualitative researchers use methodological triangulation to enhance the quality and reliability of the findings (Yin, 2018). I conducted and recorded semistructured interviews following the interview protocol (see Appendix A). Alpi and Evans (2019) identified interviews as a primary data source for case studies. I reviewed the interview

transcripts and one-page summaries via member checking to improve the reliability and validity of the semistructured interviews. Researchers integrate transcription and member checking to help reduce subjectivity and improve validity (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). Data triangulation using published literature and member checking of transcribed data from interviews strengthens the reliability and validity of the study (Yin, 2018). I triangulated data using published literature, company documents, website information, materials from participants, and member checking of transcribed data to enhance the validity of the results.

Yin (2018) suggested that data analysis follow five steps: (a) compile, (b) disassemble, (c) reassemble, (d) clarify, and (e) conclude. I followed Yin's (2018) steps of data analysis by (a) collecting and organizing data from interviews, (b) disassembling the data via pre-coding and coding data, (c) reassembling the data using post-coding, (d) interpreting data using themes ensuring credibility, and (e) forming conclusions and recommendations from the interpreted data. I used Yin's five-step data analysis process, triangulation, and NVivo for coding and interpretation to generate themes.

There are many analysis software packages available, but I used NVivo because of its known quality. Guo (2019) stated that researchers who need to analyze small or large volumes of very rich text-based data should use NVivo. Researchers use NVivo to organize the data, manage ideas, query the data, and model the analysis (Guo, 2019). I used NVivo to organize, investigate, and discover patterns within the transcripts, summaries, and additional data. Data imported into NVivo consisted of literature, notes, interview transcriptions, interpretations, and organizational documentation. To monitor

the results throughout the data collection process, data analysis was continuously used to develop themes, organize nodes, and confirm data saturation. During the conclusion stage, I compared themes generated using NVivo with categories derived from the literature review: (a) ToC, (b) retail strategies, (c) environment of retail marketing strategies, (d) multi-channel retailers in brick-and-mortar and online environments, (e) Omni-channel strategies for retailers, (f) competitive strategies for brick-and-mortar retailers, (g) Internet distribution impact on brick-and-mortar sales, and (h) showrooming. The results and conclusions from the analysis appear in Section 3 of this study.

### **Reliability and Validity**

#### **Reliability**

As the primary research instrument, I ensured dependability through member checking with participants. Researchers are key instruments for reliability and accuracy of collected data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers use member checking to obtain an accurate description and meaning of participants' perspectives or experiences from interviews (Thomas, 2016). Dependability, accuracy, and credibility of study results depend on researchers using member checking (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). Researchers use data triangulation and member checking to strengthen the reliability and validity of study results (Morse, 2015). I used NVivo as an audit trail of (a) all literature review journals, (b) interview transcripts, (c) audio recordings, (d) organizational documents, (e) letters of cooperation, (f) informed consent forms, and (g) notes taken during. Researchers support reliability through methods of observation, level of engagement, and audit trails (Morse, 2015).

**Validity**

I triangulated the data obtained from interviews, literature, and member checking to establish credibility and validity. Researchers triangulate a phenomenon by using two or more methodological approaches, data sources, or data analysis methods (Yin, 2018). Dependability, accuracy, and credibility of a study depend on researchers using member checking (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). To demonstrate credibility and transferability, researchers must adopt the appropriate research method to form an empirical analysis (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Credibility involves the approval of research findings by interviewees or peers (Morse, 2015). Transferability implies that research may apply to similar situations and transfer beyond the original project (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018). Researchers develop pronounced descriptions to enhance transferability and readers must understand and decide whether specific findings are transferable to another situation (Casey, Houghton, & Smyth, 2017). To ensure validity, I (a) conducted member checking and triangulation, (b) analyzed and interpreted data, (c) reviewed data quality, and (d) reported and applied findings to other populations.

Walden University committees consist of three individual professional educators who review the study for confirmability. Confirmable studies have a data audit trail, interpretations, and a void of researcher bias (Ellis, 2019). Member checking of semistructured interviews ensured data quality and limited researcher bias. Ellis (2019) stated confirmability represents neutrality regarding data accuracy, relevance, or meaning. Weller et al. (2018) affirmed that standardized open-ended questions allow



researchers to obtain rich data, reduce researcher bias, and answer proposed research questions. I asked participants the same open-ended questions (see Appendix A).

Establishment of a data collection process and analysis of data to achieve data saturation is imperative in any study (Walsh & Brinker, 2019). I conducted semistructured interviews with six participants, including member checking, to ensure quality of data. Researchers purposes of data saturation include ensuring replication in categories, verifying redundancy, and confirming comprehension and completeness (Morse, 2015). Vasileiou et al. (2018) stated that characteristics of data saturation include: no new data, no new themes, no new coding, and ability to replicate the study. Kazemi, Nahidi, and Kariman (2017) said only a few participants are needed for saturation if the data has depth and quality. Since five participants did not deliver data saturation, I interviewed an additional participant to achieve data saturation.

### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 2, I described several subsections, including the role of the researcher, participants, research method, research design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, data analysis, and reliability and validity. I included a justification for the use of a qualitative multiple-case study, sampling technique, and semistructured interviews with open-ended questions. In Section 3 I present the study findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and future research, reflections, and conclusions.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the effective strategies brick-and-mortar electronics and computer retail leaders used to increase revenue because of competition from online retailers. The results of the study revealed strategies that electronics and computer retail leaders used to increase revenue despite online competition. From the data analysis, I discovered that electronics and computer retail leaders were able to increase revenue despite online competition.

#### **Presentation of the Findings**

The overarching research question for this study was: What effective strategies do brick-and-mortar retail leaders use to increase revenue from electronics and computer sales despite online competition? Retail organizational leaders could use the results of this study to increase revenue from electronics and computer sales despite online competition. Retail leaders face the continuous development of new technology to either gain a competitive advantage or offer new products or services (Novikov, 2020). Data analysis developed four themes that have a connection with the ToC. Retailers using the ToC framework may procure information to approach changing technology-savvy customers to achieve desired results in the electronics and computer market. The four primary themes from the data were: (a) returning customers and trust, (b) locality-based marketing, (c) challenging smart device use in retail, and (d) maintaining stock and customization.

### Theme 1: Returning Customers and Trust

After in-depth interviews and reviewing additional company material such as brochures, websites, and local information, the theme of returning customers and trust emerged. All participants mentioned their methodology for customer retention and how they keep customers coming back to their stores. Table 1 depicts the theme, number of identified participants, and total number of references from participant interviews and company documents.

Table 1

#### *Returning Customers and Trust*

Codes	# of respondents who identified codes	Interview, Website, Blogs, Social Media	Financial and Other Corporate Documents	Total # of references
Returning customers	6	88	52	141
Exceptional service	5	76	34	110
Trust	2	8	1	9

Participants identified how they manage to retain customers and acquire and maintain customer trust in the computers and electronics industry. Participants identified how superior customer service, integrity, and a hands-on approach aided in gaining their customers' trust. Each participant stated that this trust made customers want to return every time they needed new technology, an upgrade, or services for their current products. P3 said, "customers can always rely on us for the very finest assistance and

professional excellence.” Alkhurshan and Rjoub (2020) said that maintaining close relationships with customers by increasing their satisfaction will build stronger connections, enabling companies to deliver higher quality services. Each participant also noted their specific mixture of computer and electronics products and services. P1, when discussing returning customers and trust, said, “this mixture helped the business to get a lot of returning customers.” All participants noted that they have a considerable quantity of returning customers ranging up to 90%. Customers continue to search for the best products or services that work for them, and business leaders must revise retail strategies to acquire new and retain current customers. P4 said they “provide personal services, hands-on services, that are not available on the Internet.” Leaders aim to develop trusting relationships and true partnerships with their customers to make themselves more relevant in the competitive electronics and computers marketplace (Iglesias, Markovic, Bagherzadeh, & Singh, 2020). It is important that retailers maintain close relationships with existing customers by increasing their satisfaction and building trust (Alkhurshan & Rjoub, 2020).

P2, P3, P5, and P6 mentioned online services like Google and Yelp to bring new and returning customers due to the perceived value of these rating systems. When used appropriately, the Internet and social media platforms help electronics and computer retailers as part of an omnichannel retail strategy to build trust with their customer base. P2 had “an online presence more for the advertising and customer connection aspect rather than sales” which allowed him to build rapport with his customers and develop relationships. Social media is pervasive, widely-used, and culturally-relevant as a

necessary marketing channel in today's retail industry, allowing businesses to connect with their customers before they enter a physical store (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020). Previous and returning customers provide value to organizations by leaving reviews and rating products and services received during their visits (Kapoor & Vij, 2020). Potential customers who see ratings they prefer are more likely to go to these stores (Kapoor & Vij, 2020).

Organizational leaders appeal to customers using social media tools and constantly reevaluate these methods due to rapid changes in tools and consumers' use of these tools (Appel et al., 2020). P2 created a blog with continued updates to website keywords for Internet researchers, since he did not feel that print media was valuable to the organization anymore. His blog, he said, builds trust with readers and has continued to bring customers back to the store. P6's corporate spokesman and radio campaign continue to remind previous customers and bring new customers to their stores. The spokesman already has a listener pool that trusts the station, and more specifically the spokesman, which continues to result in, according to P6, "people lined up two-three hundred yards long to shop at the store." Social media use in the retail market is almost seen as a requirement by many experts to develop relationships with their customers. Social media changes regularly in terms of the way each tool is used by consumers and approaches that organizational leaders use to reap rewards from their use. New technology in the electronics and computer market requires constant reevaluation and assessment to develop new strategies to continue to reach new and existing customers and build trust amongst everyone.

Organizational leaders may use the ToC possible changes that can occur during a given timeframe and lead to the adoption of strategies. Participants in this study indicated continued analysis of their customer base helped them to update and focus on strategies that build lasting relationships with their customers. Each participant made adjustments to their customer model to achieve success. During the design stage of the ToC, organizational leaders examine market changes to reduce their potential impact upon the organization while maintaining relationships with their customers (Freer & Lemire, 2019). Following changes and their potential impacts, organizational leaders should implement changes, monitor outcomes, make adjustments as necessary, and evaluate forecasted outcomes (Sridharan & Nakaima, 2019). While continuously assessing the market and implementation of new strategies, participants are cognizant of their customer relationships. Each participant indicated that by building customer trust, they continued to increase revenues.

### **Theme 2: Locality-Based Marketing**

After in-depth interviews and reviewing additional company material such as brochures, web sites, and local information, the theme of locality-based marketing emerged. All participants mentioned their preference in terms of focusing on the local market for each of their stores to receive the greatest return on investment (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Locality-Based Marketing*

Codes	# of respondents who identified codes	Interview, Website, Blogs, Social Media	Financial and Other Corporate Documents	Total # of references
Local Area	6	69	12	81
County	3	73	24	97
Regional	2	9		9

All participants mentioned they focused their marketing strategies on the regions in which their brick-and-mortar stores are located. Participating organizations that have locations nationwide or globally also focused on their local area for the greatest returns. Retailers have developed localized products to customers in different locations to increase local sales (Marmol, Martins, Hatami, Juan, & Fernandez, 2020). P1 said they solely operated online upon opening their store but “decided to open a retail store, mainly for local customers where we live” and have continued to lease additional space to grow their business with low prices every day. Novikov (2020) inferred that retailers and marketers are exploiting digital and video data to aid in developing advertisements and marketing messages to specifically target local customers to increase sales or increase customer engagement. P5 conducted their marketing campaigns by “advertising locally within less than ten miles.” Every participant identified that word of mouth advertising is very important for their local business from verbal referrals, forwarded sale emails, or website hits from review websites. P3 said that “continuing revenue is by word-of-mouth

based on my reputation.” Focusing on the local market helped each participating organization to grow and increase revenue year over year. Local marketing by leaders from participating organizations was extremely important for revenue continuity and longevity of their business models.

Another strategy to engage local customers used by brick-and-mortar retailers was offering a variety of products over a multi-period timeframe, typically several weeks (Marmol et al., 2020). P2 said they use customer lists for several purposes to (a) “market to their existing customer base”, (b) inform the existing customer base about upcoming sales, and (c) acquire new local customers. Local sales provide participating organizations awareness for their business and shopping opportunities and existing customer base (Artz, Eathington, Francois, Masinde, & Orazem, 2020). P4 said they focused on providing “personal services and hands-on services and build custom computers that are not available on the Internet” because online or other local retailers do not do these things well. The services and customization offered to local customers also provided opportunities for engagement of new product sales and upgrades of older products. With customers constantly connected to the Internet with smart devices, customers look for accessible alternatives (Kapoor & Vij, 2020). While Internet access is commonly believed to reduce local retail sales because of online competition, it can also connect customers to local retailers they may not normally discover (Artz et al., 2020). How successful retailers connect with the local community that surround their store locations may not be the same but have a similar goal to improve sales. P6 “hired renowned Southern California radio folks as the local spokespersons for [his] company”



to pitch services and sales to drive an increase in sales, service, and maintain brand recognition in the region. Developing methods to connect with local customers is extremely important and generally a necessity (Artz et al., 2020). How each participant markets themselves or how much they spend on marketing may also correlate to their return and overall revenue (Mohammadi, Kavooosi-Kalashami, & Zanganeh, 2020).

The speed of change in customer preferences is increasing the demands on the quality, functionality, and design of products (Novikov, 2020). Retailers using the ToC acquire information on how to approach business problems, strategies to achieve desired results, and how to address consumer's needs in the electronics and computer industry (Dhillon & Vaca, 2018). No organization is immune to changes in the environment, whether in the form of technology, competition, or demographics (Mayne, 2017). When each retailer uses the ToC to conduct pathway mapping by developing preconditions, intermediate outcomes, and long-term outcomes of newly designed strategies, they have criteria to monitor and adjust to achieve success. Organizational leaders in the electronics and computer retail industry can explore and epitomize transformation using ToC pathway mapping to adapt to change in the retail market.

### **Theme 3: Challenging Smart Device Use in Retail**

After in-depth interviews with each participant and reviewing additional company material such as brochures, websites, and local information, the theme of smart devices used to shop around by customers emerged. All participants mentioned that customers have the ability to quickly shift from brick-and-mortar to an online store or one online store to another to research the best option for their purchases (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Challenging Smart Device Use in Retail*

Codes	# of respondents who identified codes	Interview, Website, Blogs, Social Media	Financial and Other Corporate Documents	Total # of references
Cell Phone	4	8		8
Other PEDs	3	28	2	30
Shopping Around	5	54	7	61

Every participant discussed how customers in the electronics and computer industry use smart devices to conduct research and shop around. With the increasing popularity of mobile devices, consumer online shopping behaviors have gradually transited from computers to smart devices (Li, Zhao, Xu, & Pu, 2020). Participants identified how customers use their cell phones or smart devices while shopping in their stores. P1 said, “nowadays, everybody's on their cell phone” and “we have to all be online.” Smartphones, unlike any other technological innovation, have had a transformative effect on the lives of consumers by providing accessibility to almost everything at virtually any time or place (Melumad & Pham, 2020). All participants noted that they maintain an online presence to contend with online and local competition but use their brick and mortar store to create a specific niche in their local area that provides increasing revenue including price matching and accessibility of products.

Current advances in technology have resulted in a growing number of tech-savvy shoppers displaying complex buying behaviors (Haider, Guijun, Ikram, & Anwar, 2020). Each participant viewed online competition differently based on store locations. P5 stated “smart phones and an online presence is important for everyone” to effectively target customers and provide adequate comparisons for customers to feel that they are getting the best deal. Participant 6 stated that “when everyone goes online to compare, they find that we are the only manufacturer authorized and supported store in the local area” while the other option available is to “mail their products to an authorized service center elsewhere or come to our store and get their systems back faster.” Customers continue to search for the best product or service with the expected value they desire in terms of the time and effort required (Alkhurshan & Rjoub, 2020). P1 said “[customers] are checking what's out there to find the best deal and we price our products competitively.” P2 had “an online presence for advertising and customer connection aspect rather than sales.” P2 understood the importance of presence when customers search to compare prices with competitors. When customers are deciding whether or not to buy a specific product while standing in a store, 82% of customers use their smart devices to conduct additional research (Singh & Jang, 2020). The distinct advantages of mobile Internet are access to conduct research and communicate with businesses. Each customer has specific needs that directly correlate to what they value, whether it is price, time, effort, or a combination (Alkhurshan & Rjoub, 2020).

No organization is immune to change in any environment, whether the change comes in the form of technology, competition, or demographics (Mayne, 2017). Leaders

must adapt their strategies to embrace and direct change in corporate strategies to combat the effects on the business (Hemmerich et al., 2016). When retailers create a ToC intervention within a pathway for technological change for smart device uses, they develop new preconditions and create new outcomes from new strategies. Retailers using the ToC framework can challenge the use of smart devices by customers in the electronics and computer industry by analyzing their use and developing contending strategies to achieve long-term results.

#### **Theme 4: Maintaining Stock and Customization**

After in-depth interviews with each participant and reviewing additional company material such as brochures, websites, and local information, the theme of maintaining stock and the ability to customize products emerged. All participants mentioned their ability to customize products for customers and maintain stock to support their local regions (see Table 4).

Table 4

#### *Maintaining Stock and Customization*

Codes	# of respondents who identified codes	Interview, Website, Blogs, Social Media	Financial and Other Corporate Documents	Total # of references
Logistics	1	2	3	5
Customization	3	12	6	18
Stock	5	58	17	75

Participants in the study identified in-store stock and custom computer building or upgrades for their customers. Most of the time, retailers place inventory on the shelves with little or no back stock (Benrqya, Babai, Estampe, & Vallespir, 2020). Participants identified how they carry limited inventory of high-end products and more inventory of lower-end electronics and computers that tend to sell more frequently. If retailers do not have sufficient stock, they lose sales; therefore, after carefully reviewing their inventories each participant noted that it was important to ensure sufficient supply of all products with greater quantities of lower end electronics and computers to increase sales and revenues. Pereira and Frazzon (2020) stated that inventory is an important function for in-store operations, which is to provide sufficient stock for retailers to match customer demand. P6 said “people who buy computers from us do not have to ship the computer somewhere else for service. Having parts and products on hand are good reasons for people to shop and leave computers here for service.” Retailers who have sufficient stock entice customers seeking to pay a premium for immediate access to an item. Making products available for customers is crucial to successful brick-and-mortar store operations (Pereira & Frazzon, 2020).

Many participants also offer custom desktop computers to their customers and have service centers for computers and other electronics in their stores. P3 said “partnerships and relationships with all of the industry’s major suppliers are vital” to acquire stock, customize, and support their customers. Consumers tend to focus on quality, their needs, and the shopping experience rather than looking for bargains (Li et al., 2020). Most participants noted they listen to customers and provide specific services

and tailored products to meet customer demands. P2 said they “had to learn how to adapt to everyone trying to make the next electronic that is the best up-and-coming.” The computer customization process often provides customers with minimal cost difference from mass-produced items (Pallant, Sands, & Karpen, 2020). Customers continue to search for the best product or service and business leaders can revise retail strategies to attract new customers. P5 “relies heavily on building relationships with customers” for their custom products. P4 said they “build custom computers that are not available on the Internet.” Customization is becoming increasingly common in the electronics and computer market (Pallant et al., 2020). Each customer has specific custom requirements that may require slightly different variations of similar products. Maintaining availability of parts and fully built custom systems provides customers the opportunity to take home a new product today.

Organizational leaders in the electronics and computer retail industry can explore and exemplify transformation using ToC assumption and intervention models to adapt to change in the retail market. Retailers in the same market may develop different hypotheses regarding how changes occur and how to approach changes in the future (Deboeck et al., 2015). P5 stated “change within the organization is a necessary part of doing business and the need to catch up with the times.” Multiple retailers may approach technological change differently, but many meet the corporation’s long- or short-term goals by learning new strategies to manage relationships (Blustein et al., 2019). One retailer may adjust to the latest technologies by reducing prices of older technology to compete with another retailer with the latest technology. The assumptions retail leaders

include to explain changes preceded by interventions for each change strengthens the possibility of success using the ToC framework (Dhillon & Vaca, 2018). Another retailer may develop a more robust logistics network to embrace new technological change and maintain adequate stock to meet customer demand rapidly. Making products available to meet customer demand is crucial to successful brick-and-mortar store operations and allows retailers to charge customers a premium (Pereira & Frazzon, 2020).

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The ToC was used to guide the research of the business problem. Change within the retail industry is constant due to new technology to either gain a competitive advantage in the market or offer new products or services (Novikov, 2020). Findings of this study indicate some San Diego County, California electronics and computer retailers have developed effective and proven retail strategies. Customers continue to search for the best product or service and business leaders could use the findings of this study to revise their retail strategies. Building rapport and trust online prior to a customer going into the store has proven effective for the participants in the study. After proving themselves as a trustworthy company, the interviewed retail owners stated their strategies resulted in over 90% of their customers returning. Participants stated each store location focused on their local area despite having an online presence. Successful retailers also identified, local niche activities that engage customers and service capabilities or customized computing options as important strategies.

Electronics and computer retail leaders may apply the results of this study to execute strategies that can result in further profitability increases and enhance their local

reputation. The technological transformation in the economy is leading to changes in selling methods (Novikov, 2020). Retail leaders charged with increasing revenue of brick-and-mortar sales, may use the results of this study to gain an understanding of the strategies that have been successful for electronics and computer retailers in San Diego County, California.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The results of this study may help retail leaders within the electronics and computer industry to effect positive social change by developing more profitable business models from new services or strategies. More profitable business models create advantages for the local community with new jobs and increasing salaries. Cárdenas and de la Sablonnière (2020) stated that community and cultural events trigger the process of social change. It is these community events that lead to changes in customer purchasing behaviors, leading to social change (Budijarto, Hartiwiningsih, & Latifah, 2020). Retail leaders who implement effective retail strategies based on this study may affect the thinking of people who may develop positive social change in their communities. Positive social change may develop within the local community by (a) developing customer trust, (b) creation of new jobs, (c) reduction of unemployment, and (d) development of new services and strategies to aid the local communities.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The results of this study are relevant to retail leaders who seek to increase revenue despite online competition. By implementing strategies identified in this study, organizational leaders may expand skills amongst staff, direct local engagement



activities, and focus on maintaining and growing their businesses. Retailers applying the ToC framework could continue to assess their environment to revise or develop new strategies, such as addressing consumer's needs in the electronics and computer marketplace. The results from this study may be applicable for retail leaders at all levels within the San Diego County, California region and may be relevant to retail leadership nationwide or globally.

Dissemination of this study will include publication in ProQuest for future scholars and other organizational leaders. The abstract along with a detailed summary will be sent to each of the participants for them to share amongst their peers and throughout their organizations. I will continue to seek additional opportunities to share my findings as well as within business forums to aid in educating others on potential retail strategies.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This intent of this study was to explore the effective strategies brick-and-mortar electronics and computer retail leaders use to increase revenue because of competition from online retailers. When developing future research, methods to address the transferability of this study could be important to extend the reach of the study. Ensuring participants in future research are taken from an expanded region could enhance the ability to transfer the findings to other regions. Extending the geographical reach of the study may also allow the results to be more generalizable for a broader market. A final recommendation for future studies is to develop a quantitative or mixed methods study on the topic to sample results from a larger population and make inferences from descriptive

statistics. Conducting research in a less limited region, a larger population, and using descriptive statistics could be extremely useful in future studies.

### **Reflections**

When I decided to begin my education for a terminal degree, it was after a long break after completion of my master's program and I thought that I was an academically sound and a decent writer so, how hard and time consuming could it be? I then started to traverse the doctoral program by traveling into the unknown with an inaccurate perception of what I was getting myself into. The initial classes were relatively normal academic courses, but something was different. I began conducting more research and writing annotated bibliographies as well as other reading, discussions, and planning for my future study.

I moved through the academics; residencies in Houston, Texas and Atlanta, Georgia; my prospectus; and onto my proposal when I had extreme conflict with my former chair and I knew I needed to take a leave of absence to settle myself and figure out if I was really the problem. What was intended to be a couple months ended up being a few years due to life catching up with me. Do not take a leave of absence unless you must take one for serious reasons and come back quickly if you do take one. I wish I could have resolved the issues we had and continued to move forward. Sadly, I think the conflict would have continued to grow and I would have never returned so I think this path has worked out for me. I have a much more competent committee that provides assistance rather than destroying my thought process. The committee engages me with direction when I need it, supports my goals, and seeks to actively participate in my

journey. This was very different and made a huge difference in my mindset. The support of my committee and peers who have traveled the road with me has been excellent. We're all in this together and together we will win.

When completing this study, it was difficult to ask each participant the same questions but definitely a necessity to avoid corrupting the data. This also aided in reducing personal bias and allowed me to have an unbiased view of the data. The themes developed by the participant's responses drove the findings of the study and validated their effective strategies to increase revenue despite online competition. I did not expect to find locality-based marketing as a finding in the study and as I have looked into this further, it makes perfect sense. Had I impacted the study with my own biases, I would not have gained additional insight into the market and only confirmed my own beliefs. Focus on maintaining a thorough process devoid of bias to successfully conduct a study that has substance in the end.

### **Conclusion**

To obtain a competitive advantage, electronics and computer retail leaders can deliberately focus on the local market where each of their stores are operating, provide superior customer service, and maintain an online presence to reach customers that shop around. Retail shopping preferences and venues for purchasing merchandise change as often as customers' purchasing decisions due to the accessibility of information (Alexander & Muhlebach, 2019). No organization is immune to change in any environment, whether the change comes from technology, competition, or demographics (Mayne, 2017). Retailers using the ToC framework may develop approaches for ever

changing technology savvy customers to achieve desired results in the electronics and computer market. Leaders adapt their strategies to embrace and direct change in corporate strategy to combat the effects on the business (Hemmerich et al., 2016).

Electronics and computer retail leaders may apply the results of this study to analyze, develop, and execute strategies that can result in greater profitability and enhance their reputation.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Participant's Name:		Participant Identification #:	
Participant's Email:		Participant's Phone #:	
Interview Date:		Total Interview Time:	

<b>A</b>	<b>Introduction to the interview</b>		
1	Purpose	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2	Risks	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
3	Benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
4	Participant confidentiality	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
5	Right to withdraw	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>B</b>	<b>Eligibility Criteria Met:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>C</b>	<b>Informed Consent Completed:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>D</b>	<b>Demographics</b>		
1	Participant's business title		
2	Participant's pseudonym (P1, P2, etc...)		
3	Interview date		
4	Interview start time		
5	Interview end time		
6	Years and months in current position		

7	Years and months in leadership positions	
8	Number of direct and indirect employees	
9	Total number of employees in organization	
10	How long have you been in retail sales?	
11	How many years have you been in senior retail leadership positions?	
12	What is your background and area(s) of retail expertise?	
13	Have you had experience in online and retail sales? If so, how much?	
14	Do you have the ability to affect retail strategy?	
15	Have you implemented retail strategies that were successful?	
<b>E</b>	<b>Interview questions</b>	
1	What effective strategies did you use to increase revenues from electronics and computer sales despite online competition?	
2	How did you measure the effectiveness of these strategies?	
3	What made these strategies more effective than the alternative strategies?	
4	What challenges did you face when implementing effective strategies to increase revenue from electronics and computer sales despite online competition?	
5	How did you address the key challenges when implementing effective strategies?	

6	What additional information can you share with me about your effective strategies to increase revenues from electronic and computer sales despite online competition?		
<b>F</b>	<b>End interview</b>		
1	Provide participant review of responses	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2	Explain validation of transcribed responses will arrive in the participant's email (or in person, if desired) within 48 hours for review and approval.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
3	Explain how findings will be used	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
4	Reiterate participant confidentiality	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>G</b>	<b>Thank participant for their support</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>H</b>	<b>Email follow up or in person review</b>		
1	Provide transcript of responses after transcription for approval.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2	Final approved transcript from participant received.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No