



Perceived customer showrooming behavior and the effect on retail salesperson self-efficacy and performance

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Abstract

The increasing product commoditization and price transparency afforded by online retail channels have left many brick and mortar stores bearing the costs associated with being used as a physical showroom without reaping the rewards of the final sale. As customers continue to take advantage of retail stores to gather information and turn to competing channels for purchasing, the role of the retail salesperson has shifted and retailers have been left without a clear understanding of how to manage this change in the retailing landscape. In this research, we first define “showrooming” – and investigate individual (i.e., salesperson)-level experiential consequences of perceived showrooming. We find negative relationships between perceived showrooming and salesperson self-efficacy and salesperson performance, which are positively moderated by salesperson coping strategies and cross-selling strategies. Our findings suggest that the negative effects of showrooming can be combated through specific salesperson behaviors and strategies. Further, exploratory findings at the store level reaffirm a negative relationship between perceived showrooming behaviors and performance. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our findings and offer specific managerial actions to address showrooming.

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Marketers have used multiple channels to distribute goods since the early 20th century (Bartels 1965). In the late 20th century, Moriarty and Moran (1990) predicted that multi-channel structures would emerge as the dominant marketing paradigm. More recently, Van Bruggen et al. (2010, p. 331) coined the term ‘channel multiplicity’ to reflect “...the proliferation of channels used to provide information, deliver, and/or facilitate post-purchase satisfaction and retention with respect to the products and services offered...”. Channel multiplicity may induce what Verhoef, Neslin, and Vroomen (2007) referred to as

“research shopping” or seeking information in one channel (e.g., online; catalogue) and purchasing in another (e.g., retail store; wholesale outlet). One recent specific, and potentially troubling, manifestation of this is what has become known in the popular press as “showrooming” (Clifford 2012; Holton 2012; Milliot 2012; Zimmerman 2012).

While showrooming increases in popularity (Neslin et al., 2014), to date, little academic research has focused on showrooming (Feit et al. 2013; Kalyanam and Tsay 2013; Vanheems, Kelly, and Stevenson (2013)), and none has offered a systematic treatment of the construct or examined showrooming from the salesperson’s perspective. For example, Feit et al. (2013) focused on firms’ use of aggregate data across multiple channels but did not actually reference the word showrooming. Kalyanam and Tsay (2013) approached showrooming from a “free-rider” perspective, focusing on antitrust and competitive policy implications. Neslin et al. (2014) consider showrooming through the lens of research shopping and briefly touch on the topic at a conceptual level. Finally, Vanheems, Kelly, and Stevenson (2013)

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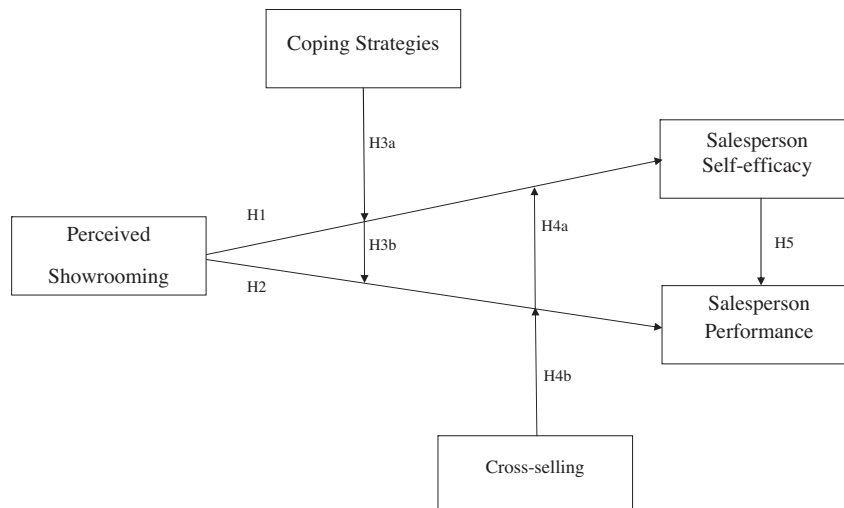
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