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 though 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.

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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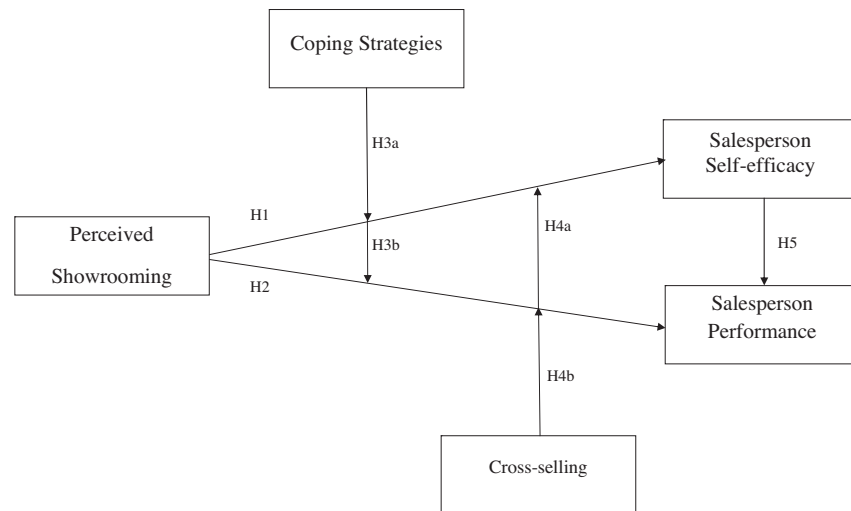 [4] Tel.: +503 725 5850

Fig. 1. Hypothesized framework.

addressed implications of multichannel marketing, concluding that retail salespeople need to be prepared to interact with customers at different stages of the buying process. The absence of any systematic treatment of showrooming in the academic literature is surprising in light of showrooming's estimated $217 billion negative impact on retail sales (www.360pi.com 2013). This enormous displacement has emerged in part due to consumers' increasing utilization of technology to self-gather information (Spaid and Flint 2014). Perhaps more disconcerting for retailers is that consumers have begun to view retail stores simply as places to handle products prior to purchase *via* other channels (Holton 2012).

Here, we report results from an exploratory study investigating showrooming in a retail environment. Due to the pivotal role retail salespeople play in the dissemination of product knowledge (Sharma, Levy, and Kumar, 2000; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan, 1986), we expect that retail losses emerge in part through their impact on retail salespeople and thus focus our efforts there (see Fig. 1). Specifically, because showrooming diminishes the professional sales role (Spaid and Flint 2014), it also can weaken perceptions of the opportunity to achieve sales success (Thau 2013) and performance outcomes (Sharma, Gassenheimer, and Alford, 2010). This pattern of engagement may have a detrimental impact on retail salespeople, exacerbating the massive dollar impact of showrooming (Vroom 1964). Thus, we propose that a critical outcome of showrooming is diminished salesperson self-efficacy, which is the "...belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments..." (Bandura 1997, p.3).

In light of this focus, we also investigate two conceptual boundaries of this relationship. The outcomes we propose emerge from showrooming are subject to self-regulatory mechanisms (Goolsby 1992; Kanfer 1990). Self-regulation encompasses "...processes that enable an individual to guide his or her goal-directed activities over time and across changing circumstances, including the modulation of thought, affect, and behavior..." (Porath and Bateman 2006, p. 185). Specifically, we evaluate the extent that two forms of self-regulation, coping

(Folkman et al. 1986), and cross-selling (Kamakura 2007), moderate the relationships between showrooming and employee's self-efficacy and performance.

With this focus, we seek to make several contributions to current understanding of multi-channel marketing. We offer an exploratory academic investigation of showrooming behavior and a coherent definitional point of departure for future academic research. Second, we focus on retail salespeople, surprisingly largely ignored stakeholders in multichannel research. Third, we provide evidence bearing on factors that managers can leverage to reduce the impact of showrooming on salesperson self-efficacy and performance.

We first offer a review of multi-channel retailing and advance a definition of showrooming, and present our conceptual model (Fig. 1). Because scant academic research addresses showrooming behaviors, we were unable to rely on a traditional literature review to guide our model development. We therefore conducted structured qualitative interviews with 17 retail store managers and 39 retail salespeople across a range of retail store types (e.g., electronics, appliances, office supplies, athletic apparel) and sizes to enrich the extant research and generate insight informing our model. We integrate these qualitative results throughout our conceptual development in support of our hypotheses. Finally, we report results from a field test, discuss managerial and theoretical implications, and offer directions for future research.

Multichannel retailing and showrooming

The use of multiple channels remains a substantive element of firm strategy (Neslin and Shankar 2009; Verhoef, Neslin, and Vroomen (2007)). The multichannel discussion has broadened to encompass not only physical distribution but also the channels consumers use to gather product information. Van Bruggen et al. (2010) argued that this 'channel multiplicity' is driven by consumers' access to – and use of – multiple sources of information, as well as expectations of seamless transitions from purchase through post-purchase service. Although prior multi-channel research has assumed deliberate, manufacturer-controlled

channel development and management, channel multiplicity is driven by factors outside firm control. This loss of control can be largely attributed to retail consumers' increased use of technology and information search (Wallace, Giese, and Johnson, 2004).

One manifestation of the increased use of technology is 'research shopping' (Verhoef, Neslin, and Vroomen (2007)), where consumers engage in product information search in one channel and purchase in another. These authors proposed three drivers of research shopping. The first, attribute-based decision-making, refers to consumers' tendency to gravitate to the most relevant channels for performing particular tasks. The second, low channel-lock-in, reflects low correlation in the channels used for information search and purchase. The third, cross-channel synergy, provides consumers with higher satisfaction when they use multiple channels to purchase products.

While Verhoef, Neslin, and Vroomen (2007) recognized that research shopping can occur in a variety of combinations across retail and online contexts, they suggested – in part from results reported by Doubleclick (2004) – that most occurs with online information search and in-store purchasing. Recent evidence, however, suggests that in-store information search and online purchasing (i.e., showrooming) has increased substantially. For example, a study by comScore (Lipsman and Fulgoni 2012) reported that 35% of respondents had engaged in showrooming, with the 25–34 age-group reporting rates as high as 50%. Further, 60% of showroomers originally planned to purchase in-store, only to change their minds and purchase online.

Although no formal academic definition of showrooming has been offered in the literature, a review of the voluminous trade literature reveals three primary themes. First, showrooming is motivated by consumers' desire to get the best deal (Evans 2012). This is not necessarily new; to some extent consumers have always been driven by value seeking and/or reference prices (Kalyanaram and Winer 1995). For certain purchases (e.g., higher price, greater complexity) consumers regularly comparison-shop, visiting multiple retail venues (Kushwaha and Shankar 2013). Second, after viewing and handling products, consumers may purchase products elsewhere, including online retailers (Evans 2012; e-Marketer 2012). Although those purchases may be made at the retailer's online site, increasingly they are made at competitors' sites (O'Donnell 2012). We propose that this may be due in large part to the third emergent theme, which is the proliferation of inexpensive mobile technology (Spaid and Flint 2014).

As the telecommunications industry has continued to upgrade its infrastructure and bandwidth (United States Telecommunications Report 2013) increased use of "smart" mobile devices (Lunden 2013) to gather products/services information online has followed (Holton 2012). Prior to ubiquitous broad-band mobile technology, consumers had to physically travel from store to store to identify and take advantage of the best deal (Cao 2012). This constraint created a sufficiently high information barrier that consumers ultimately satisfied (Simon 1959), making less-than-optimal purchases. However, technology has increased market transparency (Cruz and McKenna 2011), enabling consumers to go into a store, interact with products, and then immediately go online to determine whether a better deal is available elsewhere and, if so, to purchase the product in real-time (Lunden 2013). Thus, we propose the following definition of showrooming, as *"a practice whereby consumers visit a brick-and-mortar retail store to (1) evaluate products/services firsthand and (2) use mobile technology while in-store to compare products for potential purchase via any number of channels."*

Although the use of multiple channels to physically distribute products can be traced to the emergence of modern commerce (Bartels 1965; Mallen 1973), recent trends in the use of mobile technology (Spaid and Flint 2014) have led to a broader framing of multi-channel management to incorporate cross-channel consumer information gathering (Van Bruggen et al. 2010). While proliferation of information sources can be positive for consumers, this creates potential problems for retailers, particularly with showrooming (Thau 2013; Zimmerman 2012). Our focus is on how salesperson perceptions of customer showrooming behaviors impact retail salespeople, an often-overlooked group in multi-channel research.

Relationship between perceived showrooming and retail salesperson level outcomes

Showrooming appears to be driving potential customers from retail venues without completing transactions. Although its implications are not well understood, two likely consequences are diminished salesperson self-efficacy and sales performance. Evidence suggests that consumers increasingly visit brick-and-mortar venues to evaluate products in person (Holton 2012; Thau 2013), using mobile technology to research and perhaps purchase online (Cruz and McKenna 2011; Krywulak 2012; Zimmerman 2012). This pattern of engagement systematically reduces in-store purchases (www.360pi.com 2013), diminishing in-store retail sales. If sales drop and salespeople perceive their livelihood threatened by sales lost to the internet they also are likely to experience greater job insecurity (Sharma and Gassenheimer 2009; Sharma, Gassenheimer, and Alford, 2010) or what Bandura (1997) characterizes as declining self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy reflects the extent individuals believe they are capable of achieving effective performance (Bandura 1994). Self-efficacy rests on two primary beliefs: (1) that a task can be performed and (2) that it will lead to positive outcomes (Williams 2010). Retail salespeople are likely to experience diminished self-efficacy as increasing numbers of potential customers leave without making a purchase. This effect is likely more potent when salespeople perceive customers using mobile devices to gather information about in-store products, because providing such information has historically been a core retail-salesperson value-adding activity.

Indeed, based on initial qualitative interviews we find support for these relationships within the showrooming context. Retail salespeople indicated that when they perceive a customer engaged in showrooming, it negatively impacts both their effectiveness and performance. Many suggested their roles had been reduced to "checkout clerks" and "floor sweepers." The opportunities to make sales often were fewer, resulting in

lower performance and less certainty in their role capabilities. Further, the managers we interviewed indicated being aware of the negative effect of showrooming on store performance and employee effectiveness. They reported diminished sales by "nearly 40% over the past two years" and link this decline to a diminished salesperson floor presence. Because it drains sales from the retail venue, and diminishes salespersons' capacity to fulfill their core role, we expect that when a salesperson perceives customer showrooming, it is negatively associated with both salesperson self-efficacy, as well as individual-level sales outcomes, leading to the following predictions:

H1. *Perceived showrooming is negatively related to salesperson self-efficacy.*

H2. *Perceived showrooming is negatively related to salesperson performance.*

Self-regulation and coping with showrooming

Our objectives in this research include not only an evaluation of the salesperson-level consequences of perceived showrooming, but also an initial investigation into boundary conditions of these relationships. We propose broadly that these effects operate through self-regulation, which is the ability to alter behaviors to achieve particular goals (Porath and Bateman 2006). Baumeister and Vohs (2007) argued that self-regulation works in part because it prevents people from acting on potentially detrimental impulses that might have attractive, short-term outcomes. Self-regulation allows individuals to adopt a longer-term perspective, and informs reactions to customer showrooming.

Individuals have limited self-regulatory resources, and exposure to environmental stressors such as showrooming can deplete these resources (Hobfoll 2002). The ongoing requirement to perceive and interpret consumers' opportunistic shopping behaviors is both cognitively and emotionally challenging, and likely to reduce performance. However if retail salespeople allocate scarce resources toward the resolution of these stressors they can maintain or even improve their work performance (Lazarus and Folkman 1987; Podsakoff, LePine, and LePine, 2007). Below we discuss approach/avoidance coping strategies and cross-selling as situational vehicles with the potential to alleviate the consequences of resource depleting environmental stressors such as showrooming.

Moderating effects—approach vs. avoidance coping strategies

Strutton and Lumpkin (1994) recognized that as boundary-spanning employees, salespeople are almost continually exposed to workplace stressors. Two concepts are central to the majority of theories of psychological strain: appraisal and coping. Appraisal occurs when individuals evaluate events causing their strain. This appraisal generally emerges in two stages, in what Lazarus (1991) referred to as primary and secondary appraisals. In the primary appraisal stage, which is a relatively automatic, rapid process salespeople evaluate the extent

that the strain-inducing event is of personal relevance. If it is, in the secondary appraisal stage salespeople calculate the coping responses available to alleviate the experienced strain. Secondary appraisal is considerably more elaborate, involving assessment of coping potential, self-accountability, and outcome expectancies (Lazarus and Folkman 1987). In this stage salespeople engage in self-regulation by evaluating various coping responses to alleviate experienced strain. Responses depend heavily on individuals' disposition and ability to cope and react (Dweck and Leggett 1988; Goolsby 1992).

Following appraisal individuals engage in the second core response to psychological strain, coping, which is behavior intended to self-regulate, and encompasses the capacity to deal with environmental threats or challenges. Individuals can engage in a range of coping responses that can affect both their perceptions and behavioral responses. Among the most well-established coping frameworks are approach and avoidance (Roth and Cohen 1986). An approach or problem-focused strategy is designed "...to change the person – environment realities behind negative emotions or stress..." (Krohne 2001, p. 15166). In contrast, an avoidance or emotion-focused strategy seeks to "...reduce a negative emotional state, or change the appraisal of the demanding situation..." (Krohne 2001, p. 15166). Folkman et al. (1986) argued that approach strategies such as confrontive coping (e.g., aggressive efforts to influence the situation) or planful problem-solving (e.g., deliberate problem-focused efforts to influence the situation) are more effective when the underlying driver of experienced strain is subject to change.

In our initial qualitative interviews, a number of salespeople referenced the importance of engaging all customers, particularly showroomers. Senior salespeople discussed the importance of helping junior employees to engage customers. They understand that showrooming has modified their role as salespeople. The best way many found to cope with – and overcome – the showrooming threat was to view this activity as an opportunity to approach and engage customers most in need of information. Salespeople noted that showrooming often is "...an indicator that customers are gathering information and probably have additional questions for us." Salespeople can actually more effectively identify customers seeking additional information. Indeed, salespeople highlight that they can often use their "in-depth knowledge to keep a sale."

From the above, we argue that application of approach behaviors (e.g., confrontive coping, planful problem-solving) can attenuate the negative effects of showrooming on both self-efficacy and sales performance. From a self-regulation perspective this suggests that approach strategies should be employed even in contexts where the salesperson believes an avoidance strategy might diminish strain in the short term. When salespeople actively engage perceived showroomers, moving them toward an in-store sale (Tode 2012), utilizing their sales skills to do so (Holton 2012), both the salesperson and the consumer are likely to recognize the integral role played by the salesperson in the sales process. Engaging customers with proven sales techniques (Kalyanam and Tsay 2013) can both increase in-store sales (Tuttle 2012), and self-efficacy (Bandura

1989). In contrast, avoidance strategies (i.e., ignoring perceived showrooming behavior; distancing from showroomers) do not offer a functional response to showrooming. Because the salesperson does not engage the customer – perhaps seeking to ignore the behavior – the consequences of showrooming are unlikely to be affected by the coping response. A more probable outcome to avoidance coping is increased showrooming, because otherwise available alternative information sources (i.e., the salesperson) are essentially unavailable. Thus, approach strategies should result in higher sales than avoidance strategies, leading to the following:

H3. *Coping strategies moderate the negative relationship between perceived showrooming and: (a) salesperson self-efficacy; (b) salesperson performance, such that the relationship is less negative when an approach coping style vs. an avoidance coping style is used.*

Moderating effects—cross-selling strategies

Cross-selling refers to the sale or attempted sale of items, usually complimentary, in addition to those initially intended for purchase (Kamakura 2007). Prior research suggests that cross-selling increases the likelihood that consumers will purchase the "primary" product from the retailer (Kamakura 2007). This may be due in part to the fact that cross-selling can reduce consumers' ability to engage in direct price comparisons (Kamakura 2007; Tode 2012) and the ability of the retail salesperson to create attractive product bundles (Mulhern and Leone 1991). The ability to price-compare (Tuttle 2012) is reduced because, in real time, the salesperson can bundle various items into a lower overall package price (Mulhern and Leone 1991) than would available if the products were purchased individually. This capacity diminishes consumers' ability to establish equivalent product comparisons across channels for at least two reasons. First, it is unlikely that consumers could create a bundle online that would match the bundle created by the salesperson because the consumer is likely to need to purchase each item individually. But, even if the bundle could be created, the time and search effort necessary to do so would likely be prohibitive, thus further enhancing the value of in-store purchase. For example, a design-oriented approach allows sellers to identify a reasonable set of products that compose a bundle or identify the level of attributes within a certain bundle (Venkatesh and Mahajan 2009). With product expertise, salespeople have a more sophisticated framework to create optimal bundles. Thus, salesperson expertise remains a competitive advantage of a brick-and-mortar retail channel.

We also expect that cross-selling weakens the relationship between perceived showrooming and salesperson self-efficacy. Cross-selling can be deployed as a formal, systematic strategy to engage showroomers (Tuttle 2012) and thus can be seen as a form of self-regulation. Positioned this way, as a vehicle to enhance the purchase experience, salespeople are likely to have more opportunities for sales success (Kalyanam and Tsay 2013), enhancing self-efficacy (Bandura 1989). Expectancy theory (Vroom 1964) provides additional framing to understand

the role played by cross-selling in the relationship between showrooming and self-efficacy. Expectancy theory provides that individuals are motivated by expected outcomes. If salespeople anticipate that by cross-selling they are likely to have heightened sales success, cross-selling also should reduce the negative consequences of showrooming on self-efficacy.

Managers and salespeople in qualitative interviews identified cross-selling as one of their most effective responses to showrooming. One salesperson noted that many showroomers share information about lower online pricing, but could often be converted to a sale that included the primary product and additional supplemental products. Salespeople noted that it may be "...initially harder to upsell accessories to showroomers" who come in with an almost singular focus on getting the lowest price. However, the same showroomers often are receptive to purchasing additional items when the salesperson explains the need for accessories to augment the utility of the initial purchase. Indeed, a sales manager suggested that an initial focus on a low price for a big ticket item, such as a flat panel TV, can be countered by the inclusion of accessories that improve the performance and/or life span of the device, leading to the following:

H4. *Cross-selling moderates the negative relationship between perceived showrooming and: (a) salesperson self-efficacy; (b) sales performance, such that the relationship is less negative as cross-selling strategies increase.*

Salesperson self-efficacy and performance

For almost four decades researchers have recognized the critical performance implications of self-efficacy (e.g., Bandura 1977; Bandura 1986; Bandura 1997; Phillips and Gully 1997), or individuals' perception of their capacity to complete specific tasks and reach goals. Self-efficacy influences beliefs regarding the ability to achieve effective performance (Bandura and Wood 1989), and overcome task-related challenges (Bandura 1997; Cervone and Peake 1986). A great deal of research has focused on the individual performance consequences of self-efficacy (Stajkovic and Luthans 1998). Historically, scholars have agreed that self-efficacy relates positively to performance; a position supported by meta-analytic research (Judge and Bono 2001; Multon, Brown, and Lent, 1991). For example, Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) reported a meta-analytic correlation of .38 between self-efficacy and performance. To ground our research within an established framework, we also expect self-efficacy is positively related to salesperson performance:

H5. *Salesperson self-efficacy is positively related to salesperson performance.*

Methods

Scale development

Because there has been no systematic measurement effort bearing on showrooming reported in the literature, we developed

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

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

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

a parsimonious scale to measure showrooming as perceived by salespersons following Nunnally (1978) and Churchill (1979). We generated a list of items reflecting the potential construct domain. We used scales related to omni-shopping (i.e., Sharma and Gassenheimer 2009; Sharma, Gassenheimer, and Alford, 2010), and technology-use as models. We shared the list with academicians and practitioners in the area, and refined the list based on results from a set of qualitative interviews. We then reviewed and included activities identified in popular press outlets. The final list contained 11 items that were presented to a panel of 20 academics, experts (SMEs), and consumers who clarified wording. Participants were asked to consider retail interactions and engagement in showrooming. We then administered the 11-item scale (see Table 1) to a sample of 119 retail salespeople. Participants responded on a seven-point Likert scale with responses ranging from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree) to indicate agreement with the behaviors reflected in the items. Following factor analysis four items were dropped due to poor loadings. After refining our definition of showrooming to specify customer technology use as a necessary component, we dropped two additional items that did not specifically reference technology use. The final five-item scale resulted in a single factor, with an eigenvalue greater than one, and the majority of variance (55%) explained by a single factor. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) resulted in strong fit statistics and reliability ($\alpha = .88$).

Sample

For this study we used multiple sources of data collected from retail store managers and retail salespeople. The retail setting that served as the context for this research included privately operated specialty running stores selling a variety of top name brand athletic gear, shoes, and apparel. We focused on a specific retail setting to control extraneous factors such as level of product involvement. In order to collect survey data from these stores, we partnered with the professional association of a specific U.S. retail category. This association represents 297 retailers which represents approximately 83% of all the 357 retail stores in the industry. We contacted all 297 retailers in the association and received 158 usable responses (53.2%). In our initial contact we requested that retailers provide email addresses for in-store salespeople and sent survey-completion requests to 570 salespeople. After matching retail salesperson respondents with our retailer responses, we retained 227 responses (39.8% response rate). We compared early and late responders on all constructs (*t*-values ranged from absolute value of .05–1.21). No differences emerged between either early or late respondents, or between respondents and non-respondents in this research.

Analytical strategy

To evaluate our hypothesized relationships we conducted structural equation modeling and hierarchical regression analysis (see Table 3). All measures aside from the showrooming measure were adapted from established scales. Means, standard deviations, and latent correlations are provided in Table 2. All items can be found in Appendix A.

Measures

All measures were captured using a scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree). Salespeople provided ratings of perceived customer showrooming using the five-item measure reported in Table 1. *Coping strategies* were assessed using Strutton and Lumpkin's (1994) avoidance to approach measure, capturing five approach- and eight avoidance-type behaviors. The avoidance items were reverse coded, and an index score was created such that higher overall scores represented greater likelihood of approach behaviors. *Cross-selling strategies* were measured using four items from Jasmand, Blazevic, and de Ruyter (2012). *Self-efficacy* was indexed using a five-item measure adopted from Jones (1986). *Salesperson performance* ratings were provided by retail managers, and were assessed using five items from Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar (2004).

Analysis

To test the hypotheses, we employed covariance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS 22. We first fit a linear effects model corresponding to the hypothesized model depicted in Fig. 1, excluding the interactions required to test

Table 2
Means, standard deviations and latent correlations.

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

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

H3a&b and H4a&b. The results of our CFA indicate an acceptable fit [$\chi^2 = 390.27(190)$, $p < .01$; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .07; SRMR = .05]. All factor loadings were significant ($p < .01$) providing evidence of convergent validity. Composite reliabilities exceeded the .60 benchmark proposed by Bagozzi and Yi (1988). In addition, coefficient alphas ranged from .75 (cross-selling strategies) to .95 (self-efficacy, salesperson performance) providing evidence of construct reliability. Finally, to assess discriminant validity we conducted the test proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). This approach requires that the average variance extracted for each construct be greater than the squared correlation between any two constructs, which was met for all pairs of constructs (see Table 2). Factor loadings can be found in Appendix A.

Empirical results

To evaluate the structural relationships in our model, we first examined the linear effects, including the linear effects of coping behavior and cross-selling strategies necessary to interpret our final hypothesized model. This direct effects model exhibited acceptable fit to the data [$\chi^2 = 346.48(194)$, $p < .01$; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .05]. We found support for all three linear hypotheses. We uncovered negative relationships between showrooming and salesperson self-efficacy (H1: $\beta = -.233$, $p < .01$) and performance (H2: $\beta = -.217$, $p < .01$). We also uncovered a positive relationship between salesperson self-efficacy and performance (H5: $\beta = .244$, $p < .01$), paralleling evidence from past research (Stajkovic and Luthans 1998). Table 3 includes fit statistics and parameter estimates for the linear model and interaction model, and results from the hierarchical linear regression. To further validate the consequences of showrooming on performance, we explored the showrooming to performance relationship at the store-level, uncovering a significant negative relationship between showrooming as perceived by the store manager and archival store sales performance ($\beta = -.212$, $t = -2.71$, $p < 01$).

To test the interaction hypotheses, we mean-centered showrooming, coping, and cross-selling. We then calculated two multiplicative interactive terms incorporating showrooming and the moderators and fit a second model including these product terms as antecedents to salesperson self-efficacy and performance. For each interaction term, we specified the relationship

between the observed scores and their respective latent variables by fixing the measurement error term for the construct at [variance of scale score * $(1-\alpha)$]. Following Cortina, Chen, and Dunlap (2001), the reliability of the interaction term was estimated using the formula reported by Bohrnstedt and Marwell (1978).

This second model, incorporating all linear effects and proposed moderating effects, demonstrated an excellent fit [$\chi^2 = 335.45(190)$, $p < .01$; CFI = .96; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .05]. We find support for two of the four hypothesized interactive effects. Importantly, results from a chi-square difference test between the linear effects model and the final model including both significant interactions revealed significant improvement over the hypothesized model ($\Delta \chi^2(4) = 11.03$, $p < .05$); suggestive of the importance of retaining the interaction terms. Our analysis indicates that approach coping has a positive moderating effect on the relationship between showrooming and self-efficacy (H3a: $\beta = .181$, $p < .01$), while cross-selling has a significant positive effect on the relationship between showrooming and performance (H4b: $\beta = .157$, $p < .05$). To aid in the interpretation of the moderating effects, we plotted the effects in Figs. 2 and 3. As can be seen in Fig. 2, as showrooming increases, salespeople engaged in approach strategies reported higher self-efficacy than those engaged in avoidance strategies. Fig. 3 illustrates an interesting pattern bearing on the interaction between cross-selling and showrooming. More cross-selling appears to have little effect on performance across low vs high showrooming; but at lower levels of cross-selling under high showrooming, performance drops significantly. This suggests that under high showrooming, performance will be strongest with the utilization of cross-selling. Approach strategies did not moderate the relationship between showrooming and performance (H3b: $\beta = .001$), nor did cross-selling moderate the relationship between showrooming and self-efficacy (H4a: $\beta = -.020$).

Finally, to gauge practical significance of our findings we compared our standardized coefficients with the recommended "cut-off" values of standardized effect sizes (Ferguson 2009). Coefficients in our study range from .03 to .21 with an average effect size of .11, demonstrating a "practically significant effect" (Ferguson 2009, p. 533). Further, Aguinis et al. (2010, p. 530) point to inclusion of practitioners (e.g., sales managers) as "participants in a qualitative study" to garner practical significance – similar to the approach taken in this research.

Table 3
Standardized parameter estimates and fit statistics.

Relationships		Structural equation modeling		Hierarchical linear regression	
		Linear effects model	Interaction effects	Linear effects model	Interaction effects
H1:	Showrooming → salesperson self-efficacy	−.233**	–[a]	−.216**	–[a]
H2:	Showrooming → salesperson performance	−.217**	–	−.251**	–
H3a:	Showrooming x coping strategies[b] → salesperson self-efficacy		.181**		.154*
H3b:	Showrooming x coping strategies → salesperson performance		.001		−.006
H4a:	Showrooming x cross-selling → salesperson self-efficacy		−.020		.003
H4b:	Showrooming x cross-selling → salesperson performance		.157*		.179**
H5:	Salesperson self-efficacy → salesperson performance	.244**	.242**	.206**	.205**
Chi-square (df)		346.48(194)	335.45(190)		
p value		<.01	<.01		
CFI		.95	.96		
RMSEA		.06	.06		
SRMR		.05	.05		

Note: N = 227.
* Significant at p < .05
** Significant at p < .01
[a] Linear effects are not interpreted in the presence of a higher order interaction.
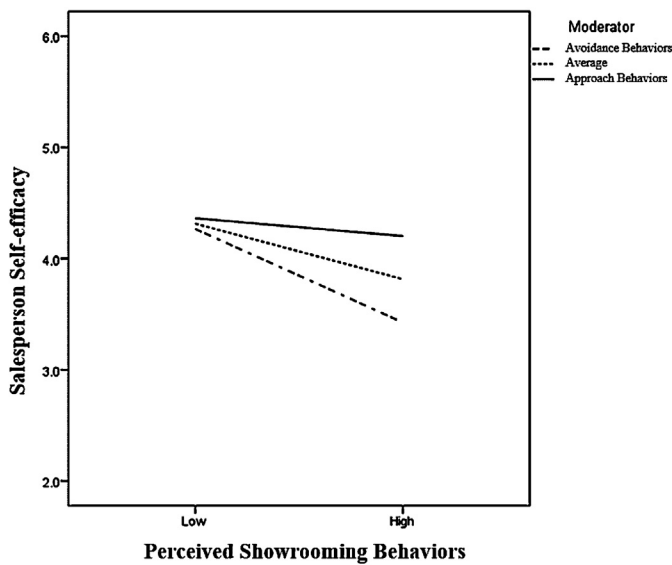[b] Higher overall coping score represents greater likelihood of engaging in approach behaviors.

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

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

Discussion

We offer an initial investigation of showrooming, noted by the National Retail Foundation as one of the most important trends currently facing retailers. Our primary focus is on the retail salesperson-level consequences of showrooming. We find that showrooming is negatively associated with salesperson self-efficacy; which is critical for boundary spanning employees (Jaramillo and Mulki 2008). Here, salesperson self-efficacy may be similar to the personal non-accomplishment dimension of Maslach and Jackson (1981) model of employee burnout. Personal non-accomplishment occurs when employees feel their best efforts can no longer produce intended results.

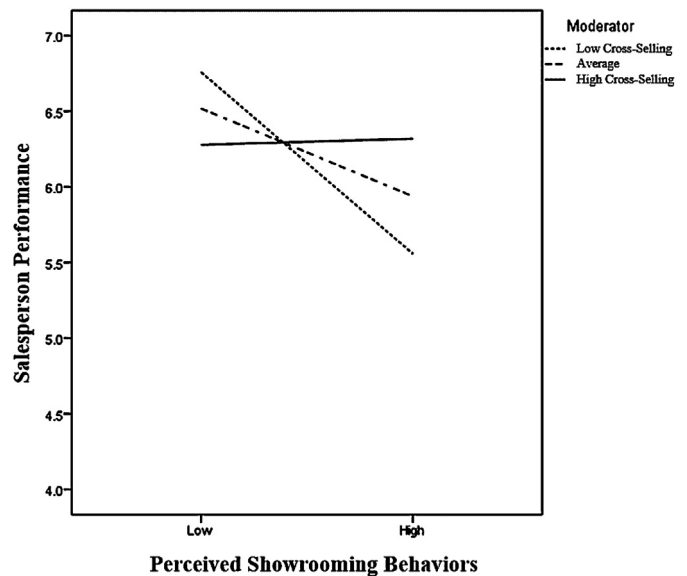The current results also suggest that showrooming is associated with decreased salesperson performance. As consumers increasingly come to view retail venues as a context for interacting with – but not necessarily purchasing – products, we suspect that salesperson performance will continue to decline. However, this relationship is likely to be exacerbated by low self-efficacy. As salespeople increasingly feel that their actions are unlikely to result in desired outcomes (i.e., sales), performance is likely to erode at an even more accelerated pace.

In order to provide insight into how to address showrooming, we evaluated the moderating role of coping strategies and cross-selling in the relationships between showrooming and salesperson self-efficacy and performance. We find support for the moderating role of coping strategies for self-efficacy, indicating that approach strategies can re-engage and re-affirm salespeople in their roles. Fig. 2 demonstrates that when

avoidance behaviors are employed in the face of perceived showrooming, employee self-efficacy declines significantly. However, the interaction plot illustrates an attenuating effect of approach strategies on employee self-efficacy in the presence of increasing showrooming behavior (Fig. 2). Resulting self-efficacy can translate to increased performance as salespeople become more confident in their role. However, we found no moderating effect of coping strategies on the relationship between showrooming and performance. It is possible that while approach coping strategies diminish the effects of showrooming on self-efficacy – due in part to feelings of successful engagement in self-regulation – simply approaching and engaging customers may not be enough in itself to increase in-store purchases. For example, if an employee perceives a customer to be showrooming and engages in approach behaviors but does not add additional value to the customer's experience, it is unlikely the customer would decide to make an in-store purchase simply because a salesperson approached them. Approach strategies alone may not be enough to boost performance when the employee does not engage in additional value adding behaviors.

We find that cross-selling moderates the relationship between showrooming and performance, attenuating the effects of showrooming. This pattern suggests that to the extent that salespeople engage customers, cross-selling can diminish the potency of showrooming through foundational selling techniques (Kalyanam and Tsay 2013). As Fig. 3 demonstrates, salespersons not engaging in cross-selling activities (i.e., low cross-selling) will see significantly lower performance as perceived showrooming behaviors increase. Cross-selling tactics, because they push additional sales, should increase salesperson performance, as customers are confronted with additional purchase options otherwise unavailable or comparable across channels. While cross-selling strategies may increase bottom-line performance, they do not significantly impact self-efficacy as showrooming behaviors increase. This pattern points to the tactical nature of cross-selling strategies. Often, in a retail environment the bundles created through cross-selling may be predefined for employees. The additional products sold are often closely related to the primary product (e.g., a sound system or blu ray player with a flat-screen television) and certain items may even be designated by the retailer as those most likely to sell. Because these cross-selling activities may not require as much individual cognition to recall and use, employees may not view adoption of such strategies as an improvement in their overall role capacity but more as a selling tool provided by the retailer to increase showroomers' options.

Managerial implications

This research provides insight into the potential impact of perceived showrooming behavior on salesperson self-efficacy and performance. Critical for managers, we also highlight boundary conditions of these relationships. The current results offer at least two approaches that can be leveraged to manage the growing showrooming phenomena and its retail sales consequences. Importantly, here, the two strategic responses (e.g., coping strategies and cross-selling strategies) appear to operate on different outcomes. Cross-selling can diminish the impact of showrooming on sales performance (but not on salesperson self-efficacy). In contrast, coping strategies can decrease the negative consequences of showrooming on salesperson self-efficacy (but not directly on salesperson performance). In light of these distinct patterns, managers should carefully consider which of these salesperson outcomes is the most relevant.

In consideration of increasing retail revenue loses attributed to showrooming, managers may be most concerned with increasing sales performance as quickly as possible. With this focus managers should encourage cross-selling to push bundles and increase the complexity associated with the generation of price comparisons. This can attenuate losses in salesperson performance from showrooming. This strategy also has the potential to increase revenue from higher margin items. Competitive pricing may lead to larger ticket items being sold at a low margin, but complementary items often being sold at a higher margin. Thus, cross-selling increases the potential for larger sales returns. In addition, showroomers may not be aware of the scope of complementary products associated with their focal purchase (Mulhern and Leone 1991). Cross-selling can help customers to reevaluate knowledge of their initial intended purchases and further consider the salesperson's expert guidance when making purchase decisions.

In contrast, some retail stores may be more focused on fostering a strong salesforce and strengthening their organizational network. Here, managers may be more concerned with the development and well-being of their salespeople and the value of their internal organization. These considerations highlight the importance of self-efficacy, and the potential value of training and rewarding approach strategies. Approach strategies can diminish the impact of showrooming on salesperson self-efficacy, potentially increasing engagement that ultimately should increase sales outcomes as well (Bandura 1977; Bandura 1986; Bandura 1994; Bandura 1997; Bandura and Wood 1989). When salespeople actively use their sales skills (Holton 2012) to engage showroomers by moving them toward an in-store purchase (Tode 2012), both the salesperson and the consumer are more likely to perceive and recognize the integral role of the salesperson. It is critical that managers recognize that showrooming cannot be effectively combatted by simply accosting every customer. Pushing cross-selling strategies may not be an effective long-term solution. A strategic focus on building value in the salesperson-customer interaction through a combination of strategies may be most likely to bear fruit in the long-term. It will be important for academic researchers both to substantiate the current results, and also to widen the nomological network within which the showrooming construct is embedded.

Future research directions

As this is largely an exploratory effort, our hope is that this research offers a point of conceptual and empirical departure for future research examining showrooming. We find that while coping strategies can attenuate the negative effect of showrooming on salesperson self-efficacy, Fig. 2 shows that even at high levels of approach the relationship is still not positive. This begs the

question of the long term effects of showrooming on salespeople; a question deserving of future research in light of potential compounding effects over time.

In addition, consideration of how salespeople view cross-selling strategies can provide insight into why cross-selling does not significantly impact their self-efficacy. If salespeople view this strategy as a short-term solution to combat showrooming to recover revenue, but not as a sustainable solution for their career, turnover and unrest within the salesforce could become problematic if cross-selling strategies are pushed by management. It will be important for future research to explore salespersons' views of cross-selling under high showrooming. Often, large ticket items being showroomed may be sales in which employees have always employed cross-selling strategies. Thus, they may not associate cross-selling with adding value to their role.

While we explore two possible avenues to combat showrooming, a multitude of strategies are currently being implemented in retail stores around the world. Many retailers are implementing strategies such as price matching (Edgell Knowledge Network 2012; Tuttle 2012), or wifi signal blocking (Clancy 2012; Klein 2012). It will be important for future research to examine the impact of these strategies so firms can choose the best options for their specific goals. For example while measureable performance outcomes are important to generate short-term revenue, customer loyalty and other relational factors such as trust and positive word-of-mouth (Rafiq, Fulford, and Lu, 2013) also can be critical (e.g., service oriented firms).

The potential ramifications of showrooming are likely to extend well beyond the limited set of outcomes we examine. With this study being one of the first empirical explorations of the impacts of customer showrooming, more research is required to gain a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon. First, since this study explored mainly salesperson effects, it is imperative that research be conducted to better understand showrooming from the consumer's perspective. Issues such as when showrooming is most likely to occur, exactly how consumers engage in showrooming, and the long term effects on store loyalty would appear to be important issues that should be addressed. Additionally, future researchers need to be cognizant of other potential outcomes, including customer, store level, and marketing strategy consequences. For example, additional research is needed to investigate the various store-level strategies that have been proposed in the trade literature for dealing with consumer showrooming behaviors. This emphasis is relevant, in part, for understanding whether showrooming impacts loyalty, or the consequences of customer behavior following showrooming events. If the retailer is the winner in the showrooming battle, does loyalty increase or decrease? At the salesperson level, we investigated two coping strategies

that could be used by salespeople when faced with consumer showrooming behaviors. Future research should explore other potential coping mechanisms that might be used by salespeople and how those may interact with any actions taken at the store level. While we believe our research offers interesting insights to managers, there remains a great deal to be done in order to fully understand the full impact of showrooming on the various constituencies impacted.

Limitations

There are several limitations with the design of this research that substantively limit our ability to draw definitive conclusions. The first is the concentration of data from one product category. Examining showrooming within the context of specialty running is relevant because specialty running footwear and apparel is a high involvement purchase, the "second most heavily showroomed category." (IDC 2012) for most people, and one for which most customers seek salesperson expertise. However, in order to establish generalizability of the current results, it will be important to examine our model across multiple product categories and firms where showrooming is perhaps more (e.g., electronics) or less prevalent (e.g., consumer packaged goods). Second, we will note that the focus of our research is how salesperson perceptions of showrooming relate to their behaviors and performance. As this is an emerging field of study, research from the consumer's perspective will help to enhance understanding of the actual incidence of showrooming. One aspect of this would be to investigate the impact of consumer showrooming activities in a multi-channel context. For example, one potential outcome of showrooming is that consumers may look at multiple channels within which to purchase products. Our focus on showrooming as observable activity that occurs within retail stores limits our ability to determine the extent that showrooming behaviors impact or are impacted by multi-channel marketing activities. As showrooming research continues to progress, this will be an important area for future research to address. Finally, although we operationalize our study model with data from multiple sources, it remains that our performance variable is operationalized with subjective managerial ratings (Starbuck and Mezias 1996). It will be important for future research exploring the individual-level performance consequences of showrooming to capture objective sales data derivative of these consumer behaviors to substantiate effects on objective sales performance.

Appendix A.

Table A1.

Table A1
Measures and CFA results.

Scale/item		α	AVE	Factor loading
Perceived showrooming		.84	.58	
1.	Customers look at the products in our store while using their mobile devices.			.87
2.	Customers use smart phones to examine product UPC codes while in our store.			.87
3.	My customers often use mobile devices to investigate products in the store.			.85
4.	Customers use technology-enabled devices to find better prices for products online.			.61
5.	Customers using technology devices while still in our store.			.55
Coping strategies		.92	.50	
	When thinking about customers using their smartphones to collect information on the internet, I typically:			
Approach				
1.	Stand my ground and fight for the sale.			.76
2.	Know what has to be done, so I redoubled my efforts to make things work.			.74
3.	Do something that I did not think would work, but at least I did something.			.79
4.	Draw on my past experiences to engage the customer.			.71
5.	Come up with a couple of different solutions to the problem.			.69
Avoidance				
6.	Take it out on other people. (r)			.74
7.	Avoid being with people in general. (r)			.76
8.	Refuse to believe it had happened. (r)			.79
9.	Went along with it; sometimes I just have bad luck. (r)			.78
10.	Don't let it get to me; refuse to think about it too much. (r)			.69
11.	Try to forget the whole thing. (r)			.75
12.	Go on as if nothing happened. (r)			.63
13.	Make light of the situation, refuse to get too serious about it. (r)			.68
Cross-selling strategies		.75	.60	
1.	I usually offer an additional product which meets the customers' needs best.			.89
2.	I usually ask questions to assess whether the customer would be willing to buy an additional product.			.86
3.	I usually try to identify good ways of familiarizing customers with another product that can satisfy their needs.			.81
4.	I hardly neglect a good opportunity to advise customers of a product which they could benefit from.			.46
Salesperson self-efficacy		.95	.82	
1.	My job is well within the scope of my abilities.			.92
2.	I do not anticipate any problems with my work in this organization.			.91
3.	I feel confident that my skills and abilities equal or exceed those of my colleagues.			.91
4.	I feel I am overqualified for the job I'm doing.			.90
5.	My past experiences and accomplishments increase my confidence that I will be able to perform successfully.			.89
Salesperson performance[a]		.95	.81	
1.	…contributing to store sales volume.			.93
2.	… selling high profit margin products.			.92
3.	… generating a high level of sales.			.89
4.	…exceeding sales targets.			.89
5.	… assisting the supervisor in meeting his or her goals.			.88

Note: CFA = confirmatory factor analysis; α = Cronbach's Alpha.

All factor loadings were significant at $p < .01$.

[a] Assessed by retail sales manager.

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