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How Saudi Small Business Managers Increase Retail Electronic Commerce Sales

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Abstract

Saudi policymakers developed short-and long-term plans supporting the electronic commerce of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) to increase sales. Saudi SME managers who do not take advantage of these plans to increase sales may lose profits. Grounded in Rogers's diffusion of innovations theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies SME business managers use to increase retail electronic commerce sales. The participants comprised 5 Saudi SME managers from 5 different local retail companies who effectively used strategies to increase retail electronic commerce sales. Data were collected through semistructured audio-visual interviews, company websites, and financial documents. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Three themes emerged from the data analysis: utilizing social media as a marketing strategy, using the government's SME online business certification platforms, and making sales through third-party online stores. A key recommendation for Saudi SME managers includes registering on the Maroof website to gain customers' trust and utilizing more than one social media source for marketing and sales. The implications for positive social change include the potential for Saudi SME managers to expand the local Saudi communities' economic growth by creating new jobs for electronic commerce supporting businesses such as home-based sellers, local supply chains, regional distribution channels, and local financial systems.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my father, Abdulaziz, who encouraged me to take this journey. To my wonderful Mom, Maryam, for her love. To my lovely wife, Noura, for her support. To my smart and talented kids, Abdulaziz, Hussain, Fatimah, and Furat.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

In Saudi Arabia, the contribution of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to the economy is 21% of the gross domestic product (GDP) and employing 57% of the total workforce (Saudi Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority [SMEA], 2017). Saudi government officials developed strategies and plans to increase the GDP contribution of the SME sector from 21% to 35% by 2030 (SMEA, 2017). Saudi SME managers could take advantage of these government strategies to grow their business locally and internationally. Also, Saudi policymakers developed short- and long-term plans to support electronic commerce adoption by local SME managers. Saudi SME managers could develop or modify their strategies and plans to align with the government's short and long-term goals.

Background of the Problem

The Saudi market is promising for SMEs to increase retail electronic commerce sales. The business-to-consumer (B2C) electronic commerce transactions in Saudi Arabia exceeded $7.87 billion in 2016 with an expected annual growth of 20% (Communications and Information Technology Commission [CITC], 2017). Saudi SMEs' share of electronic commerce volume is only 14%, and large companies in communication, civil aviation, various industries, and banking dominate the rest (Ezzi, 2016). Some Saudi SME managers are taking advantage of online shopping's rapid growth to increase their retail electronic commerce sales locally and globally (Zulfeequar Alam & Elaasi, 2016). However, some Saudi SME managers lack strategies to increase retail electronic commerce sales. In this study, I explored how some Saudi SME managers increased retail electronic commerce sales.

Problem Statement

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, only a few SME managers are taking advantage of the rapidly growing electronic commerce business (Abed, Dwivedi, & Williams, 2015). In 2016, the B2C electronic commerce in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia exceeded $7.92 billion with only a 1% share for Saudi-based companies (CITC, 2017; Ezzi, 2016). The general business problem is that some Saudi SME managers are not taking advantage of technology to increase their sales. The specific business problem is that some Saudi SME managers lack strategies to increase retail electronic commerce sales.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore how some Saudi SME managers increased retail electronic commerce sales. The study population was five SME managers from five different companies in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia who successfully used electronic commerce to increase retail sales. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to expand the economic growth for local communities by creating new jobs for electronic commerce supporting businesses including (a) home-based sellers, (b) local supply chains, (c) local distribution channels, (d) local financial systems, and (e) local delivery services. SMEs' retail electronic commerce growth could create an opportunity for Saudi officials to diversify and improve non-oil revenues.

Nature of the Study

Research methodologies are (a) quantitative, (b) qualitative, and (d) mixed methods (Leppink, 2017). Researchers use the quantitative methodology to examine an existing theory or identify relationships or differences among variables (Hannigan, 2018), which was not the purpose of this study. Researchers use the qualitative methodology to gain an in-depth knowledge of a subject or understand real practices (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018), which was appropriate for this study. Researchers use the mixed methods methodology to explore the qualitative contextual aspects and examine the quantitative relationships of a research topic (Snelson, 2016), which was not the focus of this study.

The qualitative research method offers several design approaches, such as (a) ethnography, (b) narrative, (c) phenomenology, and (e) case study (Yin, 2017). Academics use ethnography design to study groups' cultural behaviors (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), which was not the purpose of this study. Researchers use the narrative design to study events about an individual or a group through participants' individual stories (Singh, Corner, & Pavlovich, 2016; Wong, Hogg, & Vanharanta, 2017), which was not the purpose of the study. Researchers use the phenomenological design to explore the meanings of participants' lived experiences (Cypress, 2017), which was not the purpose of this study. Researchers use either a multiple or a single case study design to explore in-depth a phenomenon within its context (Yin, 2017). Researchers use multiple case studies to explore in-depth a problem from participants' perspectives to understand similarities and differences among cases (Yin, 2017). Therefore, a multiple case study design was appropriate for this research.

Research Question

The overarching research question was:

RQ: What strategies do some Saudi SME business managers use to increase retail electronic commerce sales?

Interview Questions

1. What are the strategies you use to increase retail electronic commerce sales?
2. How have you assessed the effectiveness of your strategies for increasing retail electronic commerce sales?
3. What are the resources you used to implement your effective strategies for using the electronic commerce business to increase retail sales?
4. What were the key challenges you encountered in adopting the strategies for the electronic commerce business to increase retail sales?
5. How did you address the key challenges of adopting the electronic commerce business to increase retail sales?
6. What, if any, are the government's programs and services that you use to support your retail electronic commerce sales?
7. What, if any, social media channels have been most effective at increasing retail electronic commerce sales?
8. What additional information would you like to share about the strategies your organization has employed to increase retail electronic commerce sales?

Conceptual Framework

In 1962, Rogers published the *Diffusion of Innovations theory*, in which the diffusion of innovations (DOI) theory was introduced (as cited in Singhal, 2012). Rogers defined DOI theory as the process of creativity dissemination via specific channels over time among social system participants (as cited in Trachuk & Linder, 2017). Rogers identified five main factors that influence the DOI theory adoption: (a) innovations' perceived attributes, (b) type of innovation-decision, (c) communication channel, (d) social system, and (e) change agents (Wonglimpiyarat & Yuberk, 2005). The change agents could hinder or motivate the innovation adoption depending on their characteristics, which could be (a) innovators, (b) early adopters, (c) early majority, (d) late majority, or (e) laggards (Osakwe, Chovancová, & Agu, 2016).

Researchers used the DOI theory as a conceptual framework to conduct studies in different fields such as electronic commerce, mobile banking, communications, information systems, economics, and political science (Johnson, Kiser, Washington, & Torres, 2018). Some scholars, such as Chatzoglou and Chatzoudes (2016) and Johnson et al. (2018), used the DOI theory to explore electronic commerce adoption. Other researchers did more focused studies using the DOI theory as a conceptual framework to explore electronic commerce adoption in developing countries such as Abualrob and Kang (2016); Ilin, Ivetić, and Simić (2017); Osakwe et al. (2016). Using the DOI theory and the theory of planned behavior (TPB), Zhu and Chen (2016) investigated the adoption of electronic commerce in China's new urbanites. Alsaad, Mohamad, and Ismail (2017) used the DOI theory to develop a framework that business managers could use to calculate the cost-benefit of adopting electronic commerce. Wu and Lin (2018) used the DOI theory to create a framework that managers of electronic commerce logistics companies could use to develop strategies. Therefore, I used the DOI theory, conducted semistructured interviews, and thoroughly reviewed the existing literature to understand how some Saudi SME managers increase their retail electronic commerce sales.

Operational Definitions

This section includes definitions of technical terms, jargon, and special words that I used in this study. In this section, I list some of the terms used in the study that the readers might not understand. The following definitions are either from peer-reviewed articles or official government websites.

Diffusion of Innovations: Rogers's defined DOI theory as the process of creativity dissemination via specific channels over time among social system participants (as cited in Trachuk & Linder, 2017).

Electronic commerce: Electronic commerce is the use of the latest information and communications technologies to automate the commercial transactions between B2C or business to business (B2B; Huseynov & Yıldırım, 2016; Shemi & Procter, 2018).

Electronic marketing: Researchers define electronic marketing as remote information and communication technologies (ICT) to digitally promote companies' services or products (Salamah, 2017).

Saudi 2030 vision: Saudi 2030 vision is the Saudi leaders' long-term vision to transfer the country's economy from oil-dependent to non-oil dependent by 2030 (CITC, 2017).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME): The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) officials defined SME as an enterprise employing 10 to 49 people (UNIDO, 2013). The SMEA (2017) classified SMEs into three categories. The first category is the minuscule business that employs fewer than five people and generates an annual turnover of less than $800,000. The second category is the small business that employs between 6 and 49 people and generates an annual turnover between $800,000 to $10.5 million. The third category is the medium-sized business that employs between 50 and 249 people and generates an annual turnover between $10.5 to $53.3 million.

Social media: Social media is a virtual environment where individuals and organizations interact with each other using internet applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, Snapchat, and Instagram (Malik, Asif, & Wali, 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions in qualitative studies are concepts and ideas that researchers consider as facts without a scientific proof (Schoenung & Dikova, 2016). Assumptions carry risks that could influence the research's design and findings. There were different assumptions in this qualitative study. One assumption was that the participants would understand the interview questions and provide truthful and honest answers.

The second assumption was that participants would provide updated and accurate documents. The third assumption was that by adopting the qualitative methodology and the multiple case study approach, I would be able to provide an understanding of how Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales.

Limitations

Limitations are shortcomings, circumstances, or constraints beyond the researcher's control that may affect the study's findings (Middleton, 2016). There were different limitations in this research related to electronic commerce in Saudi Arabia. One limitation was that although the participants were from different Saudi Arabia cities, they provided limited representation of the whole country.

Another limitation was that the study was specifically about retail business managers, and findings might not be transferable to other small business industries. The language was another limitation for which I had to translate interview questions and answers from English to Arabic and vice versa.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries or restrictions that researchers use to narrow the study's scope (Yin, 2017). In this multiple case study, there were three delimitations. The first delimitation was the focus on Saudi SME owners and managers who had been in business for more than 5 years. The second delimitation was to consider only SME managers who had successfully increased retail electronic commerce sales. The third was to delimit the study to SMEs in the Saudi retail industry.

Significance of the Study

This study should be of value to the practice of business because some Saudi SME managers could use the findings to (a) increase their retail electronic commerce sales, (b) provide a faster reaction with clients, (c) reach new markets, and (d) reduce market entry costs. In the first component of this section, I discuss the study's contribution to business practice. In the second component, I discuss the positive social change implications of the study.

Contribution to Business Practice

Saudi small business managers might use this study's findings to increase retail electronic commerce sales through different marketing strategies. Saudi SME managers could use this study's findings to effectively enhance their organization's marketing capabilities using electronic commerce technologies (Salamah, 2017). SME managers could include electronic commerce in their marketing strategies to gain broader access to customers (Oyza & Agwu, 2015). Barroso et al. (2019) discussed how SME managers could react dynamically to market changes and penetrate mature markets with lower costs. The contributions to this study's professional or practitioner applications were identifying and exploring how some Saudi SME managers have successfully increased their retail electronic commerce sales. Saudi SME managers could apply the findings of this study to (a) increase retail electronic commerce sales, (b) provide a faster reaction with clients, (c) reach new markets, and (d) reduce market entry costs (see Ezzi, 2016).

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the potential to expand the economic growth for local communities by creating new jobs for electronic commerce supporting businesses including (a) home-based sellers, (b) local supply chains, (c) local distribution channels, and (d) local financial systems (CITC, 2017). SME retail electronic commerce growth may create an opportunity for Saudi officials to diversify and improve non-oil revenues. SME managers who are successfully increasing retail electronic commerce sales and achieving a sustainable economic situation could participate in creating new part-time jobs for young citizens, including those listed above plus local delivery services. Also, SME managers' success in increasing their retail electronic commerce sales could create new business opportunities for Saudi entrepreneurs in supporting services such as delivery and warehouse rental businesses (CITC, 2017).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore how some Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. The literature review of this research was relevant to electronic commerce adoption by SME managers. The use of electronic commerce as a strategy to increase retail sales by Saudi managers was the focus of the literature review. The literature review sources of this research were recently published studies from (a) peer-reviewed articles, (b) scholarly books, (c) government websites, (d) and approved dissertations. The literature review included analysis, synthesis, and discussions of studies relevant or similar to this study.

The literature review resources were mainly peer-reviewed articles published between 2016 and 2020. The following databases and search engines were the sources of this study's relevant literature: (a) Business Source Complete, (b) ABI/INFORM Collection, (c) Emerald Insight Journals, (d) SAGE Journals, (e) ScienceDirect, (f) SAGE Stats, (g) Accounting, Tax and Banking Collection, (h) Business Market Research Collection, (i) ProQuest Central, (j) EBSCOhost, and (k) Google Scholar. The following single and boolean terms were the key entries I used to search the database for the literature review: *Saudi* AND *electronic commerce, Retail Business* AND *Saudi* AND *electronic commerce, e-banking* AND *Saudi, e-government* AND *Saudi, Saudi entrepreneurs, Saudi SME, internet marketing in Saudi, social media, WEB 2, small business AND Saudi, online shopping, e-procurement, e-marketing, e-business, mobile marketing, phone marketing, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, online marketing, marketing strategy, digital marketing, SME marketing barriers, SME marketing motivators, diffusion of Innovations theory, technology acceptance model, the theory of planned behavior, the theory of reasoned action,* and *the resource-based theory*. The literature review included studies from different countries including the United States, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Malaysia.

The organization of this literature review was as follows: (a) the DOI theory; (b) conceptual framework's rival theories; (c) research gap; (d) small businesses in Saudi Arabia; (e) marketing strategy, electronic commerce, and electronic marketing; (f) small businesses in Saudi Arabia; (g) retail electronic commerce and SME in Saudi Arabia; (h) factors, drivers, and barriers of adopting electronic commerce; (i) developing countries' support for electronic commerce; and (j) Saudi leaders' strategies supporting electronic commerce.

Conceptual Framework: The Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore how some Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. There were different conceptual frameworks and theories used to conduct this study, such as (a) Rogers's DOI theory, (b) resource-based view theory (RBV), (c) technology acceptance model (TAM), and (d) TPB. Researchers commonly use Rogers's (2003) DOI theory to examine a specific population's adoption of new technologies or innovations within society. For this study, I explored how Saudi SME managers adopt electronic commerce and its acceptance by local social systems. DOI theory was the conceptual framework of this study to explore how some Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales.

Rogers's diffusion of innovations theory. In 1962, Rogers published *Diffusion of Innovations*, in which the DOI theory was introduced (Singhal, 2012). Rogers defined DOI theory as the process of creativity dissemination via specific channels over time among social system participants (as cited in Trachuk & Linder, 2017). Rogers (2003) classified the DOI into four categories: innovations, communication channels, time, and social system. Researchers use DOI to explain how and why innovations spread through social systems. Adopting the DOI theory is not necessarily limited to innovations. Organizational leaders and business entrepreneurs could adopt the DOI theory for innovations that are only new to them or their organization's system but not necessarily new to the business environment. The stage in which business leaders decide to adopt new technology depends on their risk appetite. Business leaders could be (a) innovators, (b) early adopters, (c) early majority, (d) late majority, or (e) laggards (Osakwe et al., 2016). Rogers identified five technological factors that affect the adoption of DOI theory: (a) relative advantage, (b) compatibility, (c) complexity, (d) trialability, and (e) observability (as cited in Yoon, Lim, & Park, 2020).

Relative advantage. Rogers (2003) identified the relative advantage as the ratio of expected gains to the implementation cost. Fallan (2015) built on Rogers's findings and concluded that the relative advantage is directly proportional to the adoption rate. Entrepreneurs adopt innovations to gain different advantages, such as lower cost, differentiation and increase productivity. Also, entrepreneurs adopt innovation to increase consumer's perceived relative advantages of products and services. Akroush and Al-Debei (2015) indicated that Jordanian customers' perceived relative advantage affects their online shopping attitudes. Lim (2015) reached similar findings in a study conducted on Malaysian online customers. Entrepreneurs may consider adopting innovations that enhance customers' perceived relative advantage of products and services.

Compatibility. Rogers defined compatibility as the degree to which individuals perceive an innovation's consistency with organizational or professional values, past experiences, and potential users' requirements (as cited in Penjor & Zander, 2016). Innovations that are compatible with society's values have a higher chance of adoption. Individuals adopt society compatible innovation in different time frames, as some require more time to be consistent with society's values (Fallan, 2015). Individuals' use of mobile phones with the existence of landline services is an example of how the old technologies speed up the implementation of innovations.

Complexity. Rogers defined complexity as the degree to which individuals perceive the difficulty in understanding or using innovations (Penjor & Zander, 2016). Researchers conducted different studies using the DOI theory complexity attribute to explore factors that affect business leaders' decisions in adopting new technologies.

Fallan (2015) explained that business leaders are willing to adopt new technologies that encounter low complexity. Vagnani and Volpe (2017) emphasized that complexity is inversely proportional to the adoption rate, supporting Fallan's findings. Also, Falan highlighted that individuals perceive lower complexity for innovations that others adopted on a wide scale. Innovations' complexity is also related to the users' age and knowledge. Some senior citizens consider that using the Internet is an easy task (Hodge, Carson, Carson, Newman, & Garrett, 2017). Hodge et al.'s (2017) findings also support both Vagnani and Volpe's (2017) and Fallan's (2015) studies in which they discussed how the Internet for some senior citizens is complex and was not widely adopted in their daily life.

Trialability. Trialability is the degree to which individuals can experiment or test innovation for a limited duration to understand its benefits before adoption (Rogers, 2003). The greater the opportunity for individuals to experience innovations with no long-term commitment, the easier to evaluate its potential, and, ultimately, the higher and faster the adoption rate (Dutta & Omolayole, 2016; Penjor & Zander, 2016; Rogers, 2003). Chan, Borja, Welch, and Batiuk (2016) explored how faculty use trialability to evaluate new technologies' adoption. Chan et al. (2016) stated that perceived trialability is proportional to new technologies' adoption rates. Dutta and Omolayole (2016) reached similar results that trialability is important to the success of new information technology innovations. Also, Dutta and Omolayole concluded that men have a higher trialability rate of information technology innovations than women.

Observability. Observability is the degree to which the effect of using innovation is visible to others (Rogers, 2003). The more difficult individuals' opportunity to observe and describe an innovation, the higher the associated risk of adoption is (Penjor & Zander, 2016). In contrast, the more visible the effect of using innovation, the faster individuals decide whether to adopt or reject an innovation (Dutta & Omolayole, 2016). Individuals evaluate the benefits of adopting new technologies by observing others' experiences. An example of how individuals assess the results of using new theology based on observability is the rapid adoption of the cellular phone in the United States.

Researchers used the DOI theory as a conceptual framework to conduct studies in different fields such as electronic commerce, mobile banking, communications, information systems, economics, and political science (Johnson et al., 2018). Researchers also used the DOI theory to explore the adoption of electronic commerce strategy (Chatzoglou & Chatzoudes, 2016; Johnson et al., 2018). Some researchers focused their research on using the DOI theory as a conceptual framework to explore the adoption of electronic commerce in developing countries (Abualrob & Kang, 2016; Ilin et al., 2017; Osakwe et al., 2016).

Using the DOI theory and the TPB, Zhu, and Chen (2016) investigated the adoption of electronic commerce among China's new urbanites. Alsaad et al. (2017) used the DOI theory to develop a framework that business managers could use to calculate the cost-benefit of adopting electronic commerce. Wu and Lin (2018) used the DOI theory to develop a framework that managers of electronic commerce logistics companies could use to create strategies. Therefore, the DOI theory was suitable to answer the study question regarding how some Saudi SME managers increase their retail electronic commerce sales.

Conceptual Framework's Rivalry Theories

Resource-based view theory. Penrose developed the idea of viewing the firm as a group of strategic resources (as cited in Noordewier & Lucas, 2020). Based on Penrose's work, Wernerfelt (1984) introduced the RBV. Researchers use the RBV to focus on how a firm's managers maintain a set of resources to achieve a competitive advantage (Madanoglu & Ozdemir, 2016). Researchers use the RBV to illustrate how a firm's manager achieves competitive advantage by maintaining tangible and intangible resources (Schepers, Voordeckers, Steijvers, & Laveren, 2020). Researchers use the RBV to identify a firm's potential internal resources that create competitive advantages such as (a) valuable, (b) rate, (c) inimitable, and (d) not-substitutable (Tehseen et al., 2019). The RBV supporters argue that firms' managers have bundles of tangible and intangible resources that they can use to achieve a competitive advantage (Schepers et al., 2020).

Tebboune and Urquhart (2016) explained that researchers used RBV to understand the information systems' role within the firm's resources. Using the RBV theory, managers can distinguish between information technology and information systems. Information technology is an asset. However, the informant system is a mix of assets and capabilities. Based on the RBV theory, the manager could define informant system resources and use them with other assets to achieve long-term competitiveness (Tebboune & Urquhart, 2016). Madanoglu and Ozdemir (2016) used the RBV theory to examine how social media could create value for small businesses. Khan, Khan, and

Senturk (2019) used the RBV theory to explain how the executive board member's educational background is an intangible valuable resource that affects strategic decision-making.

Technology acceptance model. Researchers use Rogers's (2003) DOI theory and Davis' TAM to explore electronic commerce adoption research. Davis and Bagozzi developed the TAM in 1989 (as cited in Cabero-Almenara, Fernández-Batanero, & Barroso-Osuna, 2019). TAM, which is an adoption of the reasoned action theory from social psychology, is related to individuals' acceptance and use of theology (Hendijani Fard & Marvi, 2019). Two beliefs influence the individuals' acceptance of new theology: (a) perceived usefulness, and (b) perceived ease of use (Basarir-Ozel & Mardikya, 2017; Dakduk, ter Horst, Santalla, Molina, & Malavé, 2017). Perceived usefulness is the degree to which an individual believes that using a specific technology will enhance performance. Conversely, perceived ease of use is an individual's belief that using a particular technology needs the least possible effort. In 2000, Venkatesh and Davis introduced TAM2 as an extension of the TAM. Researchers use TAM to explore individuals' acceptance of new technology and use TAM2 to explain individuals' use of information technology (Dajani, 2016). Also, some scholars use TAM to study individuals' use of electronic commerce. Dajani (2016) used TAM to examine electronic commerce acceptance by Jordanian travel agencies. Basarir-Ozel and Mardikya (2017) applied TAM to identify the factors that affect electronic commerce adoption by Turkish online buyers. Basarir-Ozel and Mardikya found that Turkish buyers use online shopping based on their perceptions of electronic commerce's usefulness and trust, such as time and saving money. Also, other researchers conducted similar studies about electronic commerce focusing on customers' online shopping. Researchers addressed in their studies some critical factors that affect online buyer satisfaction, such as trust, convenience, perceived risk, seller's expertise, and seller's reputation (Dakduk et al., 2017; Sfenrianto, Wijaya, & Wang, 2018).

The theory of planned behavior. In 1991, Ajzen developed the TPB as an extension of the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen, 1991). Researchers use the theory of reasoned action as a model to predict an individual's intentions to take action based on two parameters only: attitude and subjective norms. However, researchers use TPB as a model to predict an individual's intentions to take action based on three parameters (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen defined TPB as a model explaining individuals' behavioral intentions to act based on (a) attitudes, (b) subjective norms, and (c) perceived behavioral control. According to TPB, attitude is the individual's perception to take action based on experience. Subjective norms are the individual's perception of social pressure to take action. Perceived behavioral control is the individual's ability to take a specific action.

Different researchers used the TPB to conduct studies about individuals' behaviors toward electronic commerce. Papagiannidis, Bourlakis, Alamanos, and Dennis (2017) conducted a study on smart shopping channels. Papagiannidis et al. explored the individual's behaviors in selecting online shopping channels and their impact on their wellbeing. Also, Akar and Dalgic (2018) conducted a study to understand online consumer's purchase intention and its relationship to the individual's social network. Akar and Dalgic found that a consumer's decision to buy online is positively affected by individuals' behavioral attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavior control.

Researchers commonly use Rogers's (2003) DOI theory to examine a specific population's adoption of new technologies or innovations within society. Based on the existing literature review and a thorough discussion of the possible alternative rivalry theories, I selected Rogers's DOI theory to be the study's conceptual framework.

Research Gap

Researchers conducted multiple studies about electronic commerce adoption by large organizations and SMEs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Abed et al., 2015). Abed et al. (2015) found that among 62 peer-reviewed articles, only 10 were about SME and electronic commerce, and none of these 10 articles was about how to increase retail electronic commerce sales. Basahel and Khoualdi (2015) supported Abed's findings in their study in which they highlighted the lack of research about how to increase retail electronic commerce sales in Saudi Arabia. Based on the literature review of the recent peer-reviewed articles, I found a research gap in how Saudi SME managers could increase retail electronic commerce sales. This study may fill the research gap about how Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales.

Small Businesses in Saudi Arabia

Government officials, economists, academics, and business authors are all interested in SME's contributions to different fields such as economy, innovation, and employment (Berisha & Shiroka Pula, 2015). Despite this mutual interest, there is no standard universal definition for SME. The absence of SME's universal definition encouraged some governments' officials to develop country-specific classifications. The government's officials could classify SMEs based on different parameters such as financial situation, the number of employees, total assets, and total sales (López-Ortega, Canales-Sanchez, Bautista-Godinez, & Macias-Herrera, 2016). UNIDO defined SME as the enterprise that employs between 10 to 49 people (UNIDO, 2013). There are many governments and international institutes that follow the UNIDO definition. However, other countries define SMEs based on the number of employees and other factors. For example, the European Union policymakers define SMEs based on three factors: (a) employees' headcount, (b) annual turnover, and (c) annual balance sheets.

In contrast, the United States Small Business Administration (SBA) defines a small business as an independent enterprise employing less than 500 people (Small Business Administration [SBA], 2016). Also, SBA has different industry-specific small business definitions that officials use in government programs and contracting. For Saudi Arabia, the SMEA classifies SMEs into three categories (SMEA, 2017). The first category is the minuscule business that employs less than five people and generates an annual turnover of less than 800 thousand US dollars. The second category is the small business that employs between 6 and 49 people and generates an annual turnover between 800 thousand to 10.5 million US dollars. The third category is the medium-sized business that employs between 50 and 249 people and generates an annual turnover between 10.5 to 53.3 million dollars. There is a significant gap in headcounts and turnover between these categories. However, as per the SMEA classification, the three categories are classified under SME.

The Saudi government’s 2030 national transformation vision includes long-term strategies and action plans supporting SME's growth (SMEA, 2017). The government’s officials established the SMEA as the first step to support SME's development and growth. Currently, the Saudi SME sector represents 21% of the country’s GDP and hires 57% of all employer firms (SMEA, 2017). The 2030 vision includes strategies and action plans to increase SME’s GDP contribution from 21% to 35% (SMEA, 2017). Also, the Saudi Industrial Development Fund authority has established a government loan guarantee program named Kafalah (Saudi Industrial Development Fund [SIDF], 2017). Kafala is a government loan guarantee for banks against supplying SMEs with the required funds to grow their business.

Saudi policymaker realizes that the country’s economy is heavily dependent on natural resources. Therefore, they stated in the country's 2030 vision a strategic goal to diversify the economy from oil-dependent into an innovative and entrepreneurship-dependent economy (Galvão, Mascarenhas, Gouveia Rodrigues, Marques, & Leal, 2017). To achieve this goal, Saudi officials focus on improving human capital and creating a knowledge-based economy. One of the Saudi officials' strategies to diversify the economy is establishing universities to build a new innovative generation and forward-looking entrepreneurs (Galvão et al., 2017). In addition to government support, Saudi entrepreneurs need to recognize business opportunities and develop innovative marketing skills to grow their businesses (Berisha & Shiroka Pula, 2015).

Marketing Strategy, Electronic Commerce, and Electronic Marketing

Marketing strategies. Business strategy is a long-term plan that managers develop to achieve company goals (Anwar & Daniel, 2016; Chatzoglou & Chatzoudes, 2016). Managers identify business opportunities and assess the company's available resources to develop a strategy (Anwar & Daniel, 2016; Chatzoglou & Chatzoudes, 2016). Business managers develop competitive strategies to overcome rivals and take a leading position (Turner & Endres, 2017). Competitive strategies are unique, non-substitutable, and non-imitable (Anwar & Daniel, 2016). Turner and Endres (2017) indicated that small business owners who develop strategies encounter fewer failures than rivals with no or ineffective strategies. Anwar and Daniel explained the positive relationship between competitive strategy and business performance, which supported Turner and Endres's findings. In both articles, the authors emphasized that managers could develop a sustainable and competitive business if they draft a well-crafted strategy.

Large organizations' managers have resources to implement different marketing strategies and marketing mix such as the 4Ps (price, place, product, promotion). However, researchers conducted different studies arguing that SME managers are unnecessary or cannot apply some of the large organizations' marketing models. SME managers encounter different factors in developing marketing strategies such as limited resources, experience, and SME managers' personalities (Resnick, Cheng, Simpson, & Lourenço, 2016). Some researchers focused on how SME managers' personalities influence marketing techniques adoption (Gilmore & Carson, 2018; Resnick et al., 2016). Researchers found that when there is no one responsible for the marketing role in the small business, the owner dedicates part of his time to do these activates, and other employees participate at different levels (Anwar & Daniel, 2016). Other researchers explored entrepreneurs' involvement level in the marketing decision process (Gilmore & Carson, 2018; Pugna, Miclea, Negrea, & Potra, 2016; Resnick et al., 2016; and Vajjhala & Thandekkattu, 2017). In these studies, researchers explained how SME managers involved in the marketing decisions depend on different factors such as the firm's financial performance, the firm's limited resources, marketing expertise, customers' knowledge, lack of time, firm size, and decision-makers networking talents. Other researchers explored the involvement of the entrepreneurs in the marketing decision process from a different perspective and argued that despite the limitations that SME manager encounter in developing marketing strategies, yet they need to adopt one or a mix of large organizations generic marketing strategies such as: (a) segmentation, (b) targeting, and (c) positioning (de Souza & De Sousa Batista, 2017).

Electronic commerce and small business. Electronic commerce is the use of the latest information and communications (IT) technologies to automate the transactions between B2C or B2B (Shemi & Procter, 2018). Researchers explored how entrepreneurs could benefit from electronic commerce potentials to outperform rivals and make their business competitive. Some researchers conducted studies about how entrepreneurs adopt electronic commerce by automating business processes such as marketing, sales, customer services, and purchasing (Betancourt, Chocarro, Cortiñas, Elorz, & Mugica, 2016). Other researchers built on some of these studies and explored how entrepreneurs could achieve results by adopting the business processes automation and electronic commerce. These researchers indicated that entrepreneurs could achieve different competitive advantages by adopting electronic commerce, such as reducing business operational costs, improving products' quality, establishing new selling channels, and enhancing customer services (Anwar & Daniel, 2016; Vajjhala & Thandekkattu, 2017). Realizing the advantages and potentials of electronic commerce, some entrepreneurs develop their business strategies based on online operations such as electronic marketing.

Electronic marketing. Researchers defined electronic marketing as the use of remote ICT to promote digitally companies' services or products (Salamah, 2017). Worldwide business managers are increasingly adopting electronic marketing strategies since the early 90s (Salamah, 2017). Business managers develop marketing strategies to convince target customers to purchase products and services. Managers adopt electronic marketing to gain many advantages such as two-way communication with customers to know their opinions and feedback about the company's products or services (Bolos, Idemudia, Mai, Raisinghani, & Smith., 2016). Based on the above literature, researchers could redefine electronic marketing by incorporating two-way communication with end-users. Researchers could redefine electronic marketing as the use of remote ICT to promote digitally companies' services or products based on customers' feedback. Entrepreneurs could also consider other differences between traditional and electronic marketing strategies and whether they could use traditional or electronic marketing or a combination of both.

Marketing is not only about advertising and reaching customers. Marketing includes different activities, such as advertising, promotion, product development, pricing, and customer relationship management (Anwar & Daniel, 2016). Some of these activities are still considered traditional marketing strategies. Traditional marketing is a one-way communication process, and there is no mechanism for incorporating customers' feedback (Bolos et al., 2016). Examples of traditional offline marketing tools are television, magazines, newspapers, posts, flyers, and billboards. By contrast, managers develop electronic marketing strategies using traditional marketing principles with additional online capabilities. Examples of online marketing tools are the company's home page, e-mail, social media, search engine optimization, product reviews, and mobile applications (Bolos et al., 2016). Researchers identified some potential benefits of electronic marketing over traditional marketing. By adopting electronic marketing, entrepreneurs could (a) remain close to customers, (b) bear low marketing cost, (c) open two-way communication channels with customers, (d) achieve faster delivery, (e) develop lower prices, (f) achieve quicker purchasing time, (g) reach millions of customers from different geographical locations, (h) provide continuous services, and (j) reduce risk (Anwar & Daniel, 2016; Bolos et al., 2016; Salamah, 2017). The business manager could achieve an effective marketing strategy using a mix of both traditional and electronic marketing tools (Bolos et al., 2016). Electronic marketing potentials encourage small business managers and entrepreneurs to consider online activities across different functional boundaries. Therefore, managers need to redesign or modify organizing's structure to incorporate online activities across different functional boundaries.

Business leaders need to know the differences between traditional and electronic marketing strategies to form an effective marketing matrix using both tools. Business leaders are familiar with traditional marketing strategies as they are available for use for a long time. Therefore some managers could adopt these tactics in their marketing strategies effectively. However, electronic marketing tools and tactics are new. Therefore, some marketing managers are still unaware of how to adopt them in their marketing strategies. For example, marketing managers could use the latest available internet applications such as social media, to develop an effective electronic marketing strategy.

Retail Electronic Commerce and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Saudi Arabia

Emerging economies are experiencing rapid electronic commerce growth. The electronic commerce implementation gap is decreasing between developed and developing economies (Alyoubi, 2015). China is an example of a developing economy with a growing electronic commerce market. Chain's electronic commerce market is the largest electronic commerce market in the world, with an annual growth rate of 17% (CITC, 2017). China's electronic commerce global share increased from 5.9% in 2014 to 33% in 2015 (CITC, 2017). India and Saudi Arabia represent other examples of developing economies that have rapidly growing electronic commerce markets. In 2015, India's electronic commerce market grew by 130% in spending (CITC, 2017). The B2C electronic commerce transactions in Saudi Arabia exceeded $7.87 billion in 2016, with an expected annual growth of 20% (CITC, 2017). Saudi Arabia B2C electronic commerce volume is the largest among Middle East countries. Alyoubi (2015) explored electronic commerce in developing countries and how to develop them during the introduction of modern systems. One finding of Alyoubi's study is that the electronic commerce implementation gap between developed and developing economies is decreasing. Ezzi (2016) explored the characteristics of the electronic commerce marketplace in Saudi Arabia. Ezzi found that electronic commerce is positively related to market development. Alyoubi's study is about developing economies' growth, and Ezzi's study is about the relationship between electronic commerce implementation and market development, which makes both studies complementary to each other. In some previous studies, researchers stated that electronic commerce's evolution in Saudi Arabia is slow (Abed et al., 2015; Al-Somali, Gholami, & Clegg, 2015). However, in recent studies, researchers indicated a substantial growth in electronic commerce activities in Saudi Arabia, which is supported by official authorities reports (CITC, 2017; Ezzi, 2016).

Saudi Arabia's market is promising for SMEs to increase retail electronic commerce sales. The B2C electronic commerce transactions in Saudi Arabia exceeded $7.87 billion in 2016, with an expected annual growth of 20% (CITC, 2017). Saudi SME's share of electronic commerce volume is only 14%, and large companies in communication, civil aviation, industries, and banking business dominate the rest (Ezzi, 2016). Some Saudi SME managers are taking advantage of online shopping's rapid growth to increase their retail electronic commerce sales locally and globally (Zulfeequar Alam & Elaasi, 2016). Saudi entrepreneurs and SME managers encounter different drivers and barriers to adopting the electronic commerce business.

Factors, Drivers, and Barriers to Adopting Electronic Commerce

Factors. Entrepreneurs and SME managers consider different factors before deciding to adopt electronic commerce as a strategy to increase sales. Entrepreneurs and

SME managers evaluate internal and external organizational factors before, during, and after adopting electronic commerce (Choshin & Ghaffari, 2017; S. C. Lim, Lim, & Trakulmaykee, 2018). Example of internal factors is: (a) top management support, (b) availability of required skills, (c) investment cost, and (d) knowledge (Alkhater, Walters, & Wills, 2018; Choshin & Ghaffari, 2017; S. C. Lim et al., 2018). Example of external factors are (a) government's regulations, (b) information and telecommunication infrastructure, (c) economic situation, (d) customers' readiness, (e) suppliers' readiness, (f) trading partners, (g) competitors use of electronic commerce, and (h) popularity of online shopping among customers. Entrepreneurs and SME managers evaluate each internal and external factor and classify it as a motivator or barrier. For example, entrepreneurs and SME managers consider the increasing popularity of online shopping among customers as a motivator to adopt electronic commerce (Ezzi, 2016; Zulfeequar Alam & Elaasi, 2016).

Based on the organization size, either small or medium, entrepreneurs and SME managers could reach different strategic decisions of adopting electronic commerce. For example, small business managers consider the psychological barrier of using new technology as a motivator to adopt electronic commerce (Lim et al., 2018). However, medium-sized business managers consider the psychological barrier of using new technology to hinder adopting electronic commerce. Lim et al. (2018) discussed how small-sized business managers and medium-sized business managers could reach different strategic decisions of adopting electronic commerce based on organizations' readiness and competitors' pressure. However, Lim et al. did not reach a firm conclusion about whether the organizations' readiness and competitors' pressure have a negative or a positive effect on managers' decision to adopt electronic commerce.

Entrepreneurs and SME managers are aware of the benefits they could achieve from electronic commerce. Also, entrepreneurs and SME managers are aware of the possible barriers they could encounter in adopting electronic commerce. Entrepreneurs and SME managers need to evaluate these potential barriers and find strategies to overcome them. Researchers explored the benefits and barriers of electronic commerce from a different perspective. Some authors explored the benefits and barriers of electronic commerce from the customers' perspective. Other authors explored the benefits and barriers of electronic commerce from the decision-makers' perspective.

Drivers. By deciding to adopt electronic commerce, entrepreneurs and SME managers could achieve different benefits. Based on the literature review, the following are some of the benefits that entrepreneurs and SME managers could achieve by adopting electronic commerce: (a) reduce business operational cost, (b) reduce market entry costs, (c) lower distribution cost, (d) lower marketing cost, (e) reach new markets, (f) establish two-way communication channels with customers, (g) establish two-way communication channels with suppliers, (h) enhance customer services, (i) improve products' quality, (j) establish new selling channels, (k) remain close to customers, (l) achieve faster delivery, (m) develop lower prices, (n) achieve quicker purchasing time, (o) provide continuous services, and (p) keep a record of customer's sales history (Anwar & Daniel, 2016; Bolos et al., 2016; Chaparro-Peláez, Agudo-Peregrina, & Pascual-Miguel, 2016; Ezzi, 2016; Salamah, 2017; Vajjhala & Thandekkattu, 2017).

Considering the organization’s internal and external environment, entrepreneurs and SME managers evaluate target benefits' possible achievement. Some benefits come as a result of adopting electronic commerce. However, entrepreneurs and SME managers need to set plans and take action to achieve some other benefits. Entrepreneurs and SME managers who are apple to take their companies to an advanced level of electronic commerce could achieve more benefits (Rahayu & Day, 2017). To gain the target benefits, entrepreneurs and SME managers need to overcome possible barriers to adopting electronic commerce. The following section is about the potential barriers that entrepreneurs and SME managers could encounter in the process of electronic commerce adoption.

Barriers. By deciding to adopt electronic commerce, entrepreneurs and SME managers could encounter different organizational internal and external barriers that could hinder electronic commerce adoption. Examples of the internal barriers could be (a) lack of required managerial skills, (b) internal resistance, and (c) high cost to acquire new technologies (Alyoubi, 2015; Kabanda & Brown, 2017; Rahayu & Day, 2017). Examples of external barriers could be (a) a limited number of qualified business partners, (b) low popularity among customers, (c) inefficient telecommunication infrastructure, (d) governments’ regulations, and (e) banks’ ineffective and limited payment systems. The low popularity of electronic commerce among customers could be due to cultural reasons. Some researchers explored how culture could be a barrier for entrepreneurs' and SME managers' adoption of electronic commerce. For example, Saudi citizens have high privacy concerns that affect their intention to use online services (Alkhater et al., 2018).

Telecommunication infrastructure is the backbone of electronic commerce. Researchers discussed how limited and inefficient telecommunication networks could negatively affect electronic commerce adoption in developing countries such as Saudi Arabia (Alyoubi, 2015; Ezzi, 2016; Rahayu & Day, 2017). Entrepreneurs and SME managers' inability to reach customers in remote areas where there are no internet services is an example of inefficient telecommunication as a barrier to adopting electronic commerce.

Based on the literature review, different researchers concluded that government regulations represent a significant barrier that entrepreneurs and SME managers encounter in adopting electronic commerce. The following paragraph is a literature summary about government regulations' effect on adopting electronic commerce by entrepreneurs and SME managers in developing countries.

Developing Countries' Support for Electronic Commerce

Business leaders are taking advantage of business globalization growth to sell their products utilizing electronic commerce. Also, customers take advantage of business globalization to find competitive prices from international companies utilizing electronic commerce (Dajani, 2016). However, both business leaders and customers encounter different risks when adopting or using electronic commerce. Electronic commerce risks could be (a) absence of regulations and rules, (b) insecure payment channels, (c) limited payment options, and (d) exposure of confidentiality and privacy (Dajani, 2016).

However, researchers' findings indicate that government officials could significantly enhance both business leaders and customers' trust to adopt and use electronic commerce by regulating their process and transactions (Alyoubi, 2015). Researchers conducted different studies to explore how the officials in the developing countries regulate electronic commerce to support the local economy and control the associated risks (Alyoubi, 2015; Dajani, 2016; Ezzi, 2016). Some researchers conducted studies about how government officials in emerging and developing economies support local SME leaders to adopt electronic commerce to benefit the national economy (Ezzi, 2016). Researchers indicated that some government's officials in emerging and developing economies, including (a) Saudi Arabia, (b) Malaysia, (c) India, (d) Sri-Lanka, and (e) Singapore, develop regulations and initiatives to support local SME leaders to adopt electronic commerce (Ezzi, 2016). Some researchers explore how officials in developing countries could use the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model to evaluate the importance of government support for electronic commerce adoption (Dajani, 2016).

Saudi Leaders Strategies Supporting Electronic Commerce

Saudi 2030 vision. Saudi leaders have a long-term vision to transfer the country's economy from oil-dependent to non-oil dependent by 2030 (CITC, 2017). Saudi policymakers developed a National Transformation Program (NTP-2030) and approved different initiatives to achieve this vision. One of the NTP-2030 objectives is to diversify the country's economy by adopting different strategic plans. Saudi policymaker approved strategies to support the diversification of the local economy. One strategy is supporting electronic commerce adoption by SMEs and customers. By adopting electronic commerce, Saudi policymakers are aiming to achieve different goals such as (a) local SME managers could expand their business internationally, (b) enhancing the local spending which attracts international investments to the country, (c) creating new jobs, (d) establishing new selling and marketing channels for home-based businesses, and (e) creating new business opportunities.

The Saudi officials realize the importance of both the local SMEs and electronic commerce in achieving the NTP-2030. Therefore, Saudi policymakers included in the NTP-2030 the objective to support local SMEs to transfer from traditional retail to electronic commerce retail. To achieve the transfer, Saudi policymakers assigned initiatives to different government's agencies, including (a) Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), (b) Saudi Post, (c) Saudi Arabia Monetary Authority (SAMA), (d) Ministry of Commerce and Investment (MCI), and (e) Saudi Small and Medium Enterprises Authority (Monsha'at). Researchers conducted different studies about Saudi officials' vision, strategies, and plans that regulate and support local retail SMEs adoption of electronic commerce, and they found that there is potential for Saudi entrepreneurs to grow their electronic commerce (Alkhater et al., 2018; Alyoubi, 2015; Basahel & Khoualdi, 2015; Ezzi, 2016).

Regulations. Saudi officials are aware of the importance of regulating electronic commerce transactions. In 1999, Saudi policymakers established the Permanent Technical Committee of Electronic Commerce (Basahel & Khoualdi, 2015). The members of this committee represent different government agencies. The committee members' role is to study the international electronic commerce development and identify infrastructures and regulations that Saudi officials need to provide to adopt electronic commerce in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. Decision-makers in MCIT developed different initiatives to support electronic commerce use by Saudi SME managers and customers (Alyoubi, 2015). The Saudi 2030 policymakers set a strategic goal for MCIT leaders to build an advanced telecommunication infrastructure and link it to international networks by 2020 (CITC, 2017). Different researchers discussed the need to improve the Saudi ICT infrastructure that is sufficient to support electronic commerce growth (Alkhater et al., 2018).

Logistics services. Retail electronic commerce SME managers need to evaluate the impact of logistics costs on their products' prices. Researchers identified different factors that retail electronic commerce SME managers need to consider in calculating the logistics cost (Strzębicki, 2017; Yu, 2017). The following are some examples that electronic commerce SME managers need to consider in calculating the logistics cost is: (a) local or domestic shipping, (b) orders' size and quantity, (c) custom's regulations, and (d) logistics providers' services quality. Other researchers conducted more focused studies on estimating electronic commerce logistics quality. Yu (2017) is one of the researchers who developed a model to estimate electronic commerce logistics services providers' quality.

To enhance the electronic commerce logistics quality and improve competitiveness, the Saudi government's officials transformed the Saudi national post into a commercial company (Basahel & Khoualdi, 2015). The Saudi 2030 policymaker set strategic goals for Saudi post leaders, including (a) implementing Saudi post's national address system, (b) launching the electronic mall site that specializes in selling online, (c) offering door to door services, and (d) integration with what3words services that divides the world into a grid of 3m x 3m squares and assigns unique 3-word identifiers to each square (CITC, 2017). Also, Saudi post leaders developed the Wasel delivery system, which is an integrated logistics services for customers to choose to collect products from post outlets or points of sale or delivered to the address.

Financial support. Effah (2016) identified that entrepreneurs in some developing countries consider inefficient electronic payment systems a barrier to adopting electronic commerce. Effah stated that the absence of effective and advanced electronic payment systems in the developing countries is due to governments' bureaucratic licensing processes. However, Saudi officials made forward steps in developing an advanced electronic payment system (Basahel & Khoualdi, 2015). The Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA) decision-makers developed different initiatives to support electronic commerce growth. One of SAMA's initiatives is to develop secure multiple payment channels that are compatible with international systems (CITC, 2017). SAMA's decision-makers implemented different electronic payments initiatives including (a) credit cards, (b) directly from a bank account, (c) contactless cards, (d) contactless smartphones, (e) electronic vouchers, (f) electronic wallets, and (e) cash on delivery. SAMA's decision-makers are also developing their applications for peer to peer (P2P) fund transfers and digital invoicing.

Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Investment. Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Investment (MCI) administrators are leaders in regulating electronic commerce activities in the country (CITC, 2017). MCI's administrators regulate the local electronic commerce start-ups and international electronic commerce investments in Saudi Arabia. MIC's policymakers aim to increase international investment from $8 billion to $19 billion by 2020. Amazon is one of the international companies that stepped into the Arabian Gulf region by accruing the UAE leading online retail company Souq.com in May 2017 for $280 million cash (CITC, 2017). In September 2017, the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia leaders and Mohamed Alabbar, a UAE investor, launched Noon.com, a one-billion-dollar online store to be the region's first Arabic electronic platform.

MCI's decision-makers developed new rules related to SME bankruptcy to make Saudi more attractive for both local start-ups and international investors. Also, MCI's decision-makers launched the Maroof website from which customers can validate officially licensed local online stores. Saudi SME retail electronic commerce managers use Maroof to gain local and international customers' trust.

Saudi Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority. The Saudi government's 2030 national transformation vision includes long-term strategies and action plans supporting SME's growth. The government's officials established the SMEA in 2016 and named it Monsha'at (SMEA, 2017). Monsha't leaders developed awareness programs about the advantages of the electronic commerce business model. In 2017, Monshat's leaders hosted the Massachusetts Institute of Technology 3rd edition of MIT Enterprise Forum.

Based on the literature review, two potential research areas are related to the study objective: (a) there is a potential for small business managers to grow their electronic commerce sales, and (b) Saudi government's leaders developed a long-term vision that supports electronic commerce in the country. Therefore, interested researchers could conduct this study or similar students based on the existing literature review focusing on these two potential research areas.

Transition

Section one included preliminary background information on the business problem of how Saudi small business managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. Section one also included an overall foundation of the study background, problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, research question, and interview questions. Section one also included a discussion of Rogers's (2003) DOI theory as the study's conceptual framework. Part of section one included the research's definition of terms, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, the significance of the study, reduction of gaps, and implications for social change. Finally, part of section one was a thorough review of the professional and academic literature.

Section two includes a discussion about the nature of the study, the qualitative methodology, and the multiple case study design. Section two also provides insight on the study (a) purpose statement, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) participants, (d) population and sampling, (e) research ethics, (f) data collections, (g) data analysis, (h) data reliability and validity, and (i) data presentation. Section three includes the presentation of findings and their contribution to the business practice.

In section three, I presented the findings and discussed them in detail. Then, I explained how professionals could apply the study's findings. I discussed the study's positive and negative implications for social change. Then, I gave recommendations for both actions and further research in the same field. Finally, I explored the research refractions and provided a conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I provide a detailed description of the project, beginning with the purpose statement. Next, I explain the role of the researcher and the participants' selection criteria. Then, I discuss the selection of qualitative methodology and multiple case studies design. I explain (a) the population sampling, (b) the population identification, (c) the sampling technique, and (d) the ethical research. In the final part of Section 2, I discuss (a) data collection instruments, (b) data collection technique, (c) data collection organization, (d) data analysis, (e) data reliability, and (f) data validation techniques.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore how some Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. The study population was five SME managers from five different companies in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia who successfully used electronic commerce to increase retail sales. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to expand the economic growth for local communities by creating new electronic commerce jobs that may support local businesses such as (a) home-based sellers, (b) local supply chains, and (e) local delivery services (CITC, 2017). Also, SME retail electronic commerce growth could create opportunities for local businesses that sell online to diversify and improve non-oil revenues.

Role of the Researcher

The role of researchers in qualitative multiple case studies includes selecting appropriate data collection instruments, organizing data, and analyzing data (Marshall &

Rossman, 2016). My role in this study was to conduct interviews with prospective participants, collect data, analyze feedback, and evaluate results. Also, my role in this study was to (a) identify the research gap, (b) establish problem and purpose statements, (c) select the research methodology, and (d) select a conceptual framework.

My main motive to conduct this study was to explore how some Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. The first motive was to provide a scholarly reference for Saudi SME managers interested in knowing how some Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. The second motive was to gain knowledge in the subject and support young entrepreneurs to start their businesses.

I have no direct or indirect relationship with participants. As I am part of the qualitative study, I adhered to ethical principles throughout the entire research. In this study, I adhered to the ethical guidelines outlined in the *Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Per the *Belmont Report*, researchers should follow three ethical principles: (a) respect participants, (b) not harm the participants and maximize the research benefits, and (c) treat participants fairly and ensure justice in distributing the study’s benefits and burdens (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). A researcher should also mitigate potential personal bias and ensure data reliability and validity (Ulriksen & Dadalauri, 2016). To mitigate and limit personal bias, researchers follow an interview protocol (Yin, 2017). Researchers develop an interview protocol to establish a uniform data collection procedure (Devotta et al., 2016). I developed an interview protocol (Appendix A) and based it on the principle of asking open-ended questions, staying focused on the subject, following rather than leading participants, and requesting participants to review notes and interpretations.

Participants

The participants of this qualitative multiple case study were five Saudi SME managers who increased retail electronic commerce sales. For effective data collection, qualitative researchers should develop participants' eligibility criteria (Yin, 2017). Researchers could develop eligibility criteria based on participants' useful and relevant experience and knowledge of the research topic (Falasca, Zhang, Conchar, & Li, 2017; Latiffi, Brahim, & Fathi, 2016). By developing eligibility criteria, researchers can select participants whose experience and attributes align with the research objectives (Moore, Blom, Whitehouse, & Gooberman-Hill, 2017). Prospective participants for this study met the following eligibility criteria: (a) Saudi SME entrepreneurs and managers, (b) having at least 1 year of experience in electronic commerce, (c) understanding and signing the consent form, and (d) accepting that the interview is recorded. The strategy to gain access to the study's potential participants was through official government websites, personal contacts, companies' websites, and the local Chamber of Commerce. For this study, I identified five prospective participants who met the selection criteria. The first five candidates who agreed to participate in the study became the research sample. Initially, I contacted participants by phone call, briefed them about the purpose of the research, and asked them to participate in the study. Upon the participants' approval, I sent them an introduction e-mail, including the consent form. In the introduction e-mail, I explained the participants' involvement in the study, the selection criteria, and confidentiality terms. Interested participants replied by e-mail, including the approved consent form. Based on the participants' convenience, I scheduled the interview date and time.

Researchers use trust as a strategy for developing a working relationship with study participants (Guillemin et al., 2016). Trust and connections with participants encourage them to provide more information and data (Kenno, McCracken, & Salterio, 2017). Participants' trust is based on the researcher, the institution, and the research ethics system (Guillemin et al., 2018). Researchers can also gain participants' trust by providing their contact details, professional experience, and academic information (Lancaster, 2017). I interviewed participants using the Zoom program, which is an online audio-visual meeting application. First, I started an open communication with the participants, assuring their confidentiality and informing them that their participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at any time. Then, I discussed with them the consent form, the research protocols, the ethical guidelines, their privacy, and data confidentiality.

After establishing a trustful and comfortable atmosphere with participants, I started the official interview by asking open-ended questions. I recorded the interviews and took notes. After interviewing all participants, I transcribed the electronic interviews into Microsoft Word documents using the Nvivo software. Then, I sent an e-mail to each participant, including a summary of his transcribed interview and asking for review and comments.

Research Method and Design

Academics use different research methodologies and designs as a systematic process linking the research sections into an executable plan to conduct academic studies (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Before conducting the study, scholars review different research methodologies and designs to identify which approach is suitable for collecting and analyzing data and answering the research's central question (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Scholars could use either the quantitative methodology, the qualitative methodology, or the mixed methods methodology (Yin, 2017). Scholars who conduct quantitative research could use one of the following design approaches: (a) experimental, (b) quasi-experimental, and (c) nonexperimental correlational (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). However, scholars who conduct qualitative research could use one of the following design approaches (a) phenomenology, (b) case study, (c) ethnography, and (d) narrative (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012).

For this study, I used the qualitative methodology and the multiple case study design approaches. In the following two sections, I include definitions and a discussion of different methodologies and design approaches. Also, in the following two sections, I present my justifications for using the qualitative multiple case study approach and why other methods and designs were inappropriate.

Research Method

Researchers use the qualitative methodology to gain an in-depth knowledge of a subject, explore a new study field, identify concerns, understand real practices, and explore a new phenomenon (Yin, 2017). Researchers adopting the qualitative methodology could collect data using one or more of the following methods: (a) conduct semistructured interviews, (b) observe participants' behaviors, and (c) explore related documentation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). By using the qualitative methodology, researchers gain an in-depth knowledge of a subject and explore a phenomenon from different perspectives using open-ended questions such as *why* and *what* (Kankam, 2020). Also, the qualitative methodology is flexible in that researchers can explain the questions to the participants and elaborate on the discussions. The qualitative research methodology was appropriate for this study because the objective was to explore how some Saudi SME managers have successfully increased their retail electronic commerce sales.

Researchers use the quantitative methodology to examine existing theories by generating numerical data and conducting statistical analysis to study correlations and relatedness between independent and dependent variables (Yin, 2017). To conduct studies using the quantitative methodology, researchers could use one or multiple of the following methods: (a) examining correlations and causality relationships between variables, (b) evaluating statistical outcomes, (c) comparing variables, and (d) investigating statistical significance indicators (Park & Park, 2016). Quantitative researchers represent data in a statistical numerical format to generalize the results of studies by using numbers. My objective of this study was not to find relationships or causality between variables. Therefore, the quantitative methodology was not suitable for my study.

An alternative to the qualitative and quantitative methodologies is the mixed methods methodology, which is a combination of both (Dopp, Mundey, Beasley, Silovsky, & Eisenberg, 2019; Yin, 2017). Researchers use the mixed methods methodology when neither the qualitative methodology nor the quantitative methodology is sufficient to study a phenomenon (Snelson, 2016). Using the mixed methods methodology, researchers benefit from qualitative and quantitative methodologies and improve the validity of the research's findings (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017; Shannon-Baker, 2016). To conduct a study using a mixed methodology, researchers need to be an expert in qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Researchers also need more time to conduct a mixed-methods study to explore and investigate a phenomenon (Turner, Cardinal, & Burton, 2017). The mixed methodology was not suitable for this study due to the limited time to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Also, this study was neither about explaining any correlations between variables nor about testing any hypothesis.

Research Design

Research methodologies are about collecting data, and research designs are about analyzing data. Depending on the nature and objective of the study, qualitative researchers use one of the following designs: (a) case study, (b) phenomenology, (c) ethnography, and (d) narrative (Petty et al., 2012). The following paragraphs include definitions and discussions of the qualitative designs and the justifications of using the multiple case study approach over the others. The last paragraph of this section is about how I ensured data saturation for this study.

According to Yin (2017), researchers use the case study design approach to explore phenomena in a real-life context by collecting in-depth data from different sources such as interviews, observations, and documentation. The research could use a single or multiple case study design (Yin, 2017). Researchers use a multiple case study design when literal or theoretical replications exist (Yin, 2017). Researchers also used a multiple case study design to enhance their ability to develop a robust theory (Onghena, Maes, & Heyvaert, 2019). Researchers use multiple case study design to conduct semistructured interviews with participants to collect data (Zieba, Bolisani, & Scarso, 2016). However, when using the multiple case study design approach, the researcher collects data from different cases and develops a comprehensive perspective of the study's subject (Yin, 2017). The objective of this study was to explore how some Saudi small business managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. For this study, I used the multiple case study design approach to collect data from five Saudi small businesses using interviews, observations, and documentation.

The purpose of the phenomenological design approach is to explore participants' behaviors by studying their lived experiences with a phenomenon (Cypress, 2017; Graham, Dixon, & Hazen-Swann, 2016). The purpose of this research was not about studying individuals' lived experience with a phenomenon. Thus, the phenomenological design approach was not suitable for this study. Researchers use the ethnography design approach to study human groups in a real-time context to understand the cultural effect on their behaviors and interactions (Crandall et al., 2016). The purpose of this study was to explore a business problem, not to study cultural interactions among people. Thus, the ethnography design approach was not suitable for this study. Researchers use the narrative approach to study human behaviors by analyzing individuals' told life stories

(Berry, 2016; Haydon, Browne, & van der Riet, 2018). The purpose of this study was to explore a business problem, not to study individuals' life stories. Thus, the narrative design approach was not suitable for this study.

Researchers reach data saturation when participants start to provide repetitive information and offer data that does not lead to new findings (Fusch & Ness, 2015). For this study, I used the triangulation technique to reach data saturation. The triangulation technique is the collection of data using different methods (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). To reach data saturation using the triangulation technique, I conducted interviews, use member checking, and reviewed documents until no new information emerges.

Population and Sampling

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore how some Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. Qualitative researchers collect data from participants who have knowledge and information on the study's subject (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The population is all cases or individuals, and the sample is a subset of all cases or individuals (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Researchers use systematic techniques to collect data from cases or individuals (Ulriksen & Dadalauri, 2016). The population for this study was Saudi SME managers, who increased retail electronic commerce sales. I limited the sample size of this study to five participants. However, I was prepared to conduct more interviews if I did not reach data saturation from the original sample.

Qualitative researchers widely use the purposive sampling method to collect rich data for their studies (Benoot, Hannes, & Bilsen, 2016; Etikan, 2016). Purposive sampling is a judgmental and nonrandom sampling method (Etikan, 2016; Yin, 2017). Qualitative researchers use the purposive sampling method to select participants who have knowledge and experience that contribute to understanding the phenomenon of a study (Benoot et al., 2016). Qualitative researchers use the purposive sampling technique to include participants that meet predefined eligibility criteria (Zerehsaz, 2017). The purpose of using the sampling method was to select participants who can provide rich information and knowledge about how some Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. This study was a qualitative multiple case study, and I developed the eligibility criteria to collect in-depth information from a limited sample size. Therefore, I selected the purposive sampling method to collect data for this study.

Researchers who use qualitative multiple case studies could conduct interviews with participants who meet predefined eligibility criteria (Yin, 2017). Researchers based their participants' selection criteria to include individuals who have knowledge and information on the study's subject (Falasca et al., 2017; Latiffi et al., 2016). According to Yin (2017), a single participant per case is enough to explore a phenomenon using a multiple case study design. To gain rich and quality information from a small sample size, researchers provide participants with detailed research objectives and conduct interviews using clear questions (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). Researchers using the qualitative methodology and the multiple case study approach specify the sample size when reaching data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The eligibility criteria for participation in this study were individuals with the following characteristics: (a) Saudi SME entrepreneurs and managers, (b) having at least one year of experience in electronic commerce, (c) understanding, comprehending, and signing the consent form, and (d) accepting to record the interview. The participants of this qualitative multiple case study were five Saudi SME managers who have increased retail electronic commerce sales.

Qualitative researchers identify sample size and stop collecting additional information when reaching data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation occurs when a new sample or participant provides redundant data or no new information (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016). Qualitative researchers reach data saturation when they gain no new findings or value from additional participants (Hagaman & Wutich, 2017; Malterud et al., 2016). Researchers conducting qualitative multiple case studies could achieve data saturation with a sample size between five to sixteen participants (Robinson, 2014). To reach data saturation for this multiple case study, I conducted five interviews with five Saudi SME managers from five different companies. Furthermore, I was prepared to conduct more interviews if I did not reach data saturation with the original sample.

The eligibility criteria for selecting the study's participants included Saudi SME managers having the following characteristics: (a) increased retail electronic commerce sales, (b) having at least one year of experience in electronic commerce, (c) understand, comprehend, and signed the consent form, and (d) willing to participate in an audio-visual recorded interview. The sample participants agreed to conduct interviews and share their experiences and knowledge about how to increase retail electronic commerce sales. The sample participants were also willing to share some future expectations about retail electronic commerce sales in Saudi Arabia.

The participants of this qualitative multiple case study were five Saudi SME managers who have increased retail electronic commerce sales. I conducted the interviews using the Zoom application, which was is online software. For participants' convenience, I asked them to specify the interview date and time. First, I started the interview by open communication with the participants assuring their confidentiality. I informed them that their participation is voluntary, and they can withdraw from the study at any time. Then, I discussed with them the consent form, the research protocols, the ethical guidelines, their privacy, and data confidentiality. After establishing a trustful and comfortable atmosphere with participants, I started the official interview using open-ended questions. I recorded the interviews and take notes. After interviewing all participants, I transcribed the audio-visual interviews into Microsoft Word documents. Then, I sent an e-mail to participants, including the transcribed interview, asking for their review corrections and comments.

Ethical Research

Scholars who conduct studies involving human subjects must adhere to ethical research principles and protect participants (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Also, researchers could develop ethical standards and practice them throughout the entire study to maintain credibility. In this study, I adhered to the research's ethical guidelines outlined in the Belmont Protocol Report (The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Per the Belmont

Protocol Report, researchers should follow three ethical principles: (a) respect participants, (b) not harm the participants and maximize the research benefits, and (c) treat participants fairly and ensure justice in distributing the study's benefits and burdens (The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979).

Researchers need to ensure participants' privacy and confidentiality protection to gain their trust and cooperation. Researchers could use an informed consent form to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality (Yin, 2017). An informed consent form is an official policy and an implied agreement between a researcher and an individual who participates in a study (Grady et al., 2017). I sent an invitation e-mail to participants briefing them about the study. The e-mail consisted of the study's purpose, the interview procedure, the interview questions, the confidentiality protection, the voluntary nature of participation, the withdrawal instructions, and an informed consent form. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions and clarifications about the study before signing the informed consent form. Participants who agreed to be part of the study signed the consent form and sent it back to me. In the invitation e-mail, I informed participants that I will record the interviews, and I will collect some documents from their companies' websites. In the consent form, I informed the participants that their participation is voluntary, without compensation or incentives, and they can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. In the consent form, I clarified that participants who decided to withdraw from the study only need to inform me via a telephone call or an e-mail. Also, I informed the participants that if anyone withdraws from the study, he has the option to allow the use of his recorded interview or ask for the destruction of all his information.

Researchers are responsible for keeping participants' identities confidential (Turcotte-Tremblay & Mc Sween-Cadieux, 2018). Therefore, I assigned alphanumeric codes to refer to participants and their companies in the study. For participants, I used alphanumeric codes PX, where P stands for a participant, and X stands for a number. Examples of participants' coding were P1 and P2. For companies, I used alphanumeric codes CX, where C stands for a company, and X stands for a number. Examples of companies coding were C1 and C2. As per the consent form, participants' identifications and coding were confidential and were saved in a secure place. I informed the participants that I will save their interviews, audio-visual recordings, and electronic data on a secure digital storage device. I also informed the participants that I will store the written data, documents, and findings in a locked cabinet. In the consent form, I stated that after five years from the doctoral study's publication date, I will delete the electronic data, destroy the audio-visual recording, and shred the documents.

Before collecting data and conducting interviews, I applied to obtain permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approval number for this study is 08-03-20-0579073, and it expires on August 2nd, 2021. I provided the Walden University representative's number and contact details in the e-mails I sent to the participants.

Data Collection Instruments

In qualitative studies, researchers are the primary data collection tool (Gorlin, Dalrymple, Chelminski, & Zimmerman, 2016). Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated that researchers are the primary data collection instruments in qualitative studies because they interact directly with participants through hearing, seeing, and interpreting the data. I was the primary data collection instrument in this qualitative multiple case study. For data collection, I conducted audio-visual online-semistructured interviews with the sample participants using open-ended questions (Appendix B). I recorded the interviews and take notes for data coding, transcription, and analysis. I used the member checking technique to enhance the reliability and validity of participants' answers to interview questions.

Researchers could collect data using different approaches such as interviews, questionnaires, surveys, and observations. Interviews could be either structured, semistructured, or unstructured. As per Ridder (2017), using a semistructured interview, including open-ended questions, researchers could analyze participants' responses and experiences and gain in-depth knowledge about the study's topic. Silverman (2017) highlighted that researchers could enhance the relationship and trust with participants through flexible bidirectional communication by using semistructured interviews. Silverman (2017) also stated that using semistructured interviews, participants could ask questions for better understanding, share additional information, and elaborate on their responses.

Researchers use open-ended interview questions to allow participants to answer questions freely and be able to ask for clarifications (O'Keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozović,

& Sinha, 2016). To use semistructured interviews, researchers develop a protocol which is a guideline for the interview process (Arsel, 2017). Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, and Kangasniemi (2016) stated that the interview protocol is a guideline to allow participants to exchange their knowledge with researchers during interviews. Bundy (2017) stated that by using semistructured interview protocols, researchers could classify questions into themes with a focus on the study's subject. Therefore, I used a semistructured interview consisting of eight open-ended questions to collect data for this study. To mitigate and limit personal bias, I developed and followed an interview protocol (Appendix A). I developed the protocol principles based on asking open-end questions, stay focused on the subject, follow rather than leading participants, ask participants to review notes and interpretations.

Researchers use different techniques to enhance the reliability and validity of data collection instruments. For example, researchers could use (a) an expert panel to validate interview questions, (b) member checking follow up interviews after semistructured interviews, (c) triangulation of multiple data collection techniques. Different scholars, such as Galdas (2017) and Varpio, Ajjawi, Monrouxe, O'Brien, and Rees (2017), suggested that researchers who use semistructured interviews could implement the member checking technique to enhance their collected data reliability and validity. Member checking is a technique in which researchers ensure their collected data reliability and validity by sending summaries of the interviews transcriptions, data interpretations, and coding results to participants for review, comments, and corrections (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Varpio et al., 2017; Wang, Duan, & Yu, 2016). Therefore, for this study, I used the member checking technique to enhance the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments.

Data Collection Technique

The objective of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore how some Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. To gather data for qualitative studies, researchers could use different data collection technologies such as participants' observation and in-depth semistructured interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). To collect data for this study, I was the primary data collection instrument, and I used a semistructured interview technique. I conducted interviews with participants following a predefined protocol (Appendix A). The protocol's primary purpose was to stay focused on the study’s objective and conduct interviews systematically. I used the member checking follow up interview technique to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments.

Before conducting any interview, I sent an invitation letter to each participant through an e-mail, including the study’s objective, the interview protocols, the interview questions, the confidentiality protection affirmation, a statement about the voluntary nature of the participation, the withdrawal instructions, and an informed consent form. For participants’ convenience, the e-mail included a section in which they can specify the date and the time of the interview. I followed the e-mail with a telephone call asking the participants if they need any clarification.

The interview started with an introduction explaining the purpose of the study. First, I built trust with participants by assuring their confidentiality and privacy. Also, I informed participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Then, I discussed the consent form, the interview protocols, the ethical guidelines, and the data privacy with the participants. After establishing a trustful and comfortable atmosphere with participants, I started the official interview following the protocols in Appendix A and using the predefined open-ended questions in Appendix B. I recorded the interviews using the Zoom application, and I take notes using pen and paper. After interviewing all participants, I converted the electronic interviews into Microsoft Word documents, and I included the notes in the same document. Then, I sent an e-mail to each participant, including the transcribed interview, asking for review and comments. Due to time constraints and limited access to participants, I did not conduct a pilot study.

Qualitative researchers use interview techniques to understand research questions through participants' experiences and knowledge of the study’s subjects (Abildgaard, Saksvik, & Nielsen, 2016). Qualitative researchers use one-to-one semistructured interviews consisting of open-ended questions to collect data and gain detailed knowledge about the study’s subjects (Ridder, 2017). Using one-to-one semistructured interviews, researchers could enhance the relationship and trust with participants through flexible bidirectional communication (Silverman, 2017). Silverman also stated that using semistructured interviews: participants could ask questions for better understanding, share additional information, and elaborate on their responses. Researchers use open-ended interview questions to allow participants to answer questions freely and be able to ask for clarifications (O'Keeffe et al., 2016). The semistructured interview has advantages and disadvantages. One advantage of the semistructured interview with open-ended questions is that researchers could involve participants in a direct discussion allowing a rich understanding of the study's questions and then sharing related experiences and knowledge (Mao & Feldman, 2019).

Researchers need to be aware of the interview technique's disadvantages and eliminate or minimize their effects. One disadvantage is that the interview technique is time-consuming (Young et al., 2018). To minimize the effect of this disadvantage, before any meeting, I prepared all participants' related documents, surfed the sample companies' websites, reviewed interview questions, and confirmed the meeting time. Another disadvantage of the interview technique is the limited access to participants (Young et al., 2018). Researchers encounter limited access to participants due to time constraints, or participants are not allowed or willing to share sensitive data. To encourage participants to participate in the study and share data, I agreed with participants to send them a copy of the study's results and findings.

For this study, I used the member checking technique to enhance data reliability and validity and to reach data saturation. Following the member checking technique process, I transcribed interviews, interpreted data, summarized the results, and sent them to participants for review and feedback. I repeated this process until participants provided no further information, and I reached data saturation.

Data Organization Technique

Using a proper data organization technique, researchers could effectively access information during and after the data collection process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Also, researchers use data organization techniques to (a) retrieve related information for data analysis, (b) present study findings, (c) generate study related reports, (d) classify data, (e) and identify emerging patterns. In the data organization technique, researchers anonymously refer to participants using a coding system to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality (Lancaster, 2017). Therefore, I assigned alphanumeric codes to refer to participants and their companies. For participants, I used alphanumeric codes PX, where P stands for a participant, and X stands for a number. Examples of participant's coding were P1 and P2. For companies, I used alphanumeric codes CX, where C stands for a company, and X stands for a number. Examples of companies coding were C1 and C2.

Researchers use different tools to develop an effective data organization technique. For this study, I used reflective journals, the Nvivo application, and the Microsoft Word document application. Reflective journals are documents in which researchers write notes during and after an interview. Nvivo is an application that researchers use to collect, classify, and analyze interview content. Also, researchers use Nvivo for data coding and emerging themes identification. I used reflective journals to take notes during interviews. I used Nvivo to transcript interviews, code data, and identify emerging themes. I used Microsoft Word to generate reports.

I recorded the interviews using the Zoom application, and at the same time, I take notes using reflective journals. In addition to notes, the reflective journals included the participant's name, company name, and the interview time and date. After interviewing all participants, I used the Nvivo application to convert audio-visual records into electronic text. Also, I used Nvivo for data coding and emerging themes identification. I used Nvivo to perform data cleansing to delete irrelevant information that does not align with the study objectives. Researchers use the member checking follow-up interview techniques to enhance the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments (Birt et al., 2016; Varpio et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2016). Therefore, I sent the interviews' transcription, the data interpretations, and the data coding for their review and correction to the participants. Adhering to Walden's research requirements of retaining data, I will save interviews, audio-visual recordings, and electronic data on a secure digital storage device, and I will store the written data, documents, and findings in a locked cabinet. After five years from the doctoral study's publication date, I will delete the electronic data, destroy the audio-visual recording, and shred the documents.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the process of classifying, correlating, and investigating collected information to find patterns (Guo & Guo, 2016). Researchers study patterns to transform them into meaningful interpretations (Robson & McCartan, 2016). For qualitative studies, there are different data analysis techniques. For this study, I used the methodological triangulation technique to analyze data collected from different sources, including interviews, observations, websites, and documents. The methodological triangulating technique is a qualitative data analysis procedure in which researchers use more than one data source to study a phenomenon (Noble & Heale, 2019). Researchers use the methodological triangulation technique to enhance data analysis reliability and validity (Van Dijk, Vervoort, Van Wijk, Kalkman, & Schuurmans, 2016). Researchers also use triangulation to explore data from different perspectives to gain a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Joslin & Müller, 2016).

Researchers follow a logical and sequential process for data analysis. For this study, I followed Yin’s five-step data analysis process: (a) compile the database, (b) disassemble data, (c) reassemble data, (d) interpret data, and (e) conclude (Yin, 2017). For data compilation, I conducted interviews using predefined open-ended questions. I recorded the interviews using the Zoom application, and I will take notes using a pen and paper. Also, I collected data from participants' companies' websites. For data disassembling, I transcribed the electronic interviews into Microsoft Word documents, and I included the notes in the same document. For data reassembling, I organized and classified data using the Nvivo application and Microsoft Word document.

I used the Nvivo application to convert audio-visual records into electronic text. Also, I used Nvivo to collect, classify, analyze interview contents, and interpreted data. Then, I used Nvivo to perform data cleansing to delete irrelevant information that did not align with the study’s objectives. Finally, I identified emerging themes. I used the methodology triangulation to link reoccurring themes that emerge from interviews, notes, documents, and websites. During data cleansing and triangulation, I narrowed my search to information related to the study objective. The final phase was concluding, in which I transformed the patterns and the emerging themes into meaningful interpretations related to the central research question.

Researchers classify data from different sources using codes. Each code refers to a significant idea or pattern within the collected data (Taylor et al., 2016). Researchers could develop codes starting from the research's questions and add them as new themes emerge (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Researchers define themes as repeated ideas within a text (Navidi, Hassanzadeh, & Zolghadr Shojai, 2017). Using all the information sources, I only coded the data that is related to my study. I repeated the coding process, looking for repeated and correlated ideas, concepts, words, and phrases until I identified all themes. Then, I transformed themes into meaningful findings.

To identify the themes and reoccurring ideas, I used Nvivo to transcript interviews, code data, and identify emerging themes. I used Microsoft Word to generate reports. Nvivo is an application which researchers use to collect, classify, and analyze interview contents. Also, researchers use Nvivo for data coding and to identify emerging themes from the collected data.

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative researchers use different reliability and validation evaluation techniques throughout the data collection and analysis process to assess studies' quality and rigor (Stanton, 2016). Researchers evaluate qualitative studies' reliability and validity using the following four criteria: (a) dependability, (b) credibility, (c) transferability, and (d) confirmability (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Dependability is related to reliability. Whereas credibility, transferability, and confirmability are related to validity.

Reliability

Qualitative research's reliability refers to the findings' consistency and methodology repeatability (Yin, 2017). Qualitative researchers achieve reliability when their study's findings are consistent over time, and their study's sample represents the total population accurately (Spiers, Morse, Olson, Mayan, & Barrett, 2018). In simple words, reliable studies are the ones that researchers could repeat using multiple sources of data and yet getting similar results. Researchers use multiple sources to collect data in one study to ensure consistency and data interpretation. (Yin, 2017).

For this study, I followed a predefined interview protocol to collect data from participants, and I strictly followed the same steps in collecting data from websites. Protocols are guidelines that researchers use to conduct interviews systematically and keep both researchers and participants focus on the study's objectives (Arsel, 2017). For reference, I listed the interview protocol in Appendix A and listed interview questions in Appendix B. Researchers use the member checking technique to enhance data reliability and to ensure data consistency (Varpio et al., 2017). For this study, I used the member checking technique to enhance data reliability and to ensure data consistency. Following the member checking technique, the researcher transcripts interviews interpret data, summarizes results, and then sends them to participants for their review and feedback (Birt et al., 2016; Varpio et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2016).

Dependability. Researchers validate their collected data trustworthiness using different techniques such as member checking and data triangulation to establish a dependable study. Dependability refers to findings' consistency and study replicability (Pierre, 2017). For this study, I adopted the member checking technique to establish research dependability.

Validity

Qualitative research validity is a verification process that scholars adopt to ensure data interpretation and findings' generalizability are accurately representing participants' views against a phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers use the following three criteria to ensure the validity of a qualitative study: (a) credibility, (b) confirmability, and (c) transferability (Macduff, Stephen, & Taylor, 2016). To establish qualitative studies' validity, researchers need to use appropriate tools and techniques for data collection, analysis, and presentation (Varpio et al., 2017).

Credibility. Yin (2017) described the qualitative research's credibility as the degree to which studies' findings are believable. Credibility refers to research's high-quality data and findings trustworthiness (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Researchers assure credibility by conducting systematic and in-depth studies that properly explore a phenomenon and contribute to the knowledge of the research area (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers enhance their studies' credibility by adopting triangulation methodology using a different data source such as semistructured interviews, documents, and percipients engagement in findings review (Gentil et al., 2017).

For this study, I used the member checking and triangulation techniques to assess credibility. The triangulation technique is a qualitative data analysis procedure in which researchers use more than one data source to study a phenomenon (Noble & Heale, 2019). Researchers use the triangulation technique to enhance data analysis reliability and validity (Van Dijk et al., 2016). Researchers also use triangulation to explore data from different perspectives to gain a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Joslin &

Müller, 2016). For this study, I used the triangulation technique to analyze data collected from different sources, including interviews, reflective journals, and websites. The member checking is a technique in which researchers send interview transcriptions, data interpretations, and coding results to participants for review, feedback, and data validation (Birt et al., 2016; Varpio et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2016). For this study, I used the member checking technique to maximize credibility by inviting participants to give feedback and judgments about the study findings.

Transferability. Researchers define transferability as readers' or researchers' ability to generalize an original study’s findings to other studies (Apers et al., 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative researchers could evaluate whether study findings are transferable to other studies or not. To ensure this study's transferability, I used an interview protocol to collect data, explain the data analysis technique, and thoroughly discuss the findings.

Confirmability. Scholars define confirmability of qualitative researchers as the degree to which independent reviewers can identify completed studies’ source of data, documentation, data analysis technique, and data syntheses technique to support the studies’ and confirm findings (Chaker, Schumann, Zablah, & Flint, 2016). Researchers establish confirmability through objectivity, avoiding bias, and demonstrating findings without modifications or alterations (Bryman & Bell, 2015). For this study, I established confirmability by following the interview protocol, using predefined open-ended questions, saving interview recordings, documenting transcripts, using reflective journals, and providing copies of data analysis and data synthesis techniques. Also, I used the member checking technique for data confirmation. Researchers use the member checking techniques to confirm that their collected data represent participants' knowledge and free from bias. For this study, I focused on participants' knowledge and experience to avoid bias and personal insights.

Data Saturation. Qualitative researchers achieve data saturation when the data collection process reveals no new information and no new emerging themes (Hagaman & Wutich, 2017). To reach data saturation for this study, I conducted interviews until no insight and no additional data emerge from any additional interview. For qualitative studies, there is no exact number of interviews that researchers could conduct to reach data saturation (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017; Malterud et al., 2016). This study's sample size was five Saudi SME managers, and I was continuously reevaluating the sample size until I reached data saturation. Researchers could estimate the sample size by reviewing similar previous studies (Malterud et al., 2016). As an additional source for data saturation, I considered reflective journals' notes to locate any new emerging themes or any additional data. Also, I used the member checking technique to ensure data rigor and data saturation.

Transition and Summary

In section two, I discussed the project’s phases. First, I started section two by restating the purpose statement to stay focus on the study objective. Then, I illustrated my role as a researcher and my relationship with participants. Next, I explained the research method and design. Then, I highlighted both the population and the sampling methods. Next, I emphasized that I would conduct a complete study according to research ethics.

Then, I discussed data collection, organization, and analysis techniques. Finally, I explained how I would achieve data reliability and validity.

In section three, I presented the findings and discussed them in detail. I then explained how business managers, government officials, and research academics could apply or use the study findings. Next, I discussed the study's positive and negative implications for social change. Then, I gave recommendations for further research in the same field. Finally, I explored the research refractions and provided a conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that some Saudi SME managers use to increase retail electronic commerce sales. The conceptual framework foundation of this study was Rogers's (2003) DOI theory. I collected the study data through semistructured interviews with five Saudi SME managers. The five participants had experience and knowledge in adopting different strategies to increase retail electronic commerce sales. For participants' convenience, I asked each of them to specify the interview date and time. The interviews were semistructured and consisted of eight open-ended questions. I used the member checking technique to ensure data validity and reliability. To protect the participants' confidentiality and privacy, I did not declare their names or their companies' names.

For data analysis, I first transcribed the interviews. Then, I created related codes based on participants' answers to each question. Next, I reviewed the codes and categorized them under groups. Finally, I analyzed the groups and identified emerging themes. There were three primary emerging themes that participants used to increase retail electronic commerce sales: (a) utilizing social media as a marketing strategy, (b) using government SME online business certification platforms, and (c) making sales through third-party online stores. Participants identified that using social media marketing was the most effective strategy to increase retail electronic commerce sales.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question of this study was: What strategies do Saudi SME business managers use to increase retail electronic commerce sales? To answer this research question, I conducted a qualitative multiple case study. The DOI theory was the foundation of the conceptual study framework. I used DOI theory to explore and understand how some Saudi SME managers increased retail electronic commerce sales. Also, I used the DOI theory as a reference for data collection and data analysis. I used the purposeful sampling method to select the study participants. The participants were five Saudi SME managers from five different companies. I assigned alphanumeric codes for participants to ensure their confidentiality. For data collection, I conducted five virtual semistructured interviews using the online Zoom application. The interviews consisted of eight open-ended questions. Also, I collected data using reflective journals and participants’ companies' websites. To mitigate personal bias during the data collection process, I developed and adopted an interview protocol. For data analysis, I used the triangulation technique. To analyze data, I used Yin’s (2017) five steps process. As per Yin, the five steps are (a) data compiling, (b) data disassembling, (c) data reassembling, (d) data interpreting, and (e) findings presentation. For data coding and emerging themes identifications, I used Nvivo software.

First, I transcribed the interviews. Then, I created related codes based on participants' answers to each question. Next, I reviewed the codes and categorized them under groups. Finally, I analyzed the groups and identified emerging themes (Figure 1).

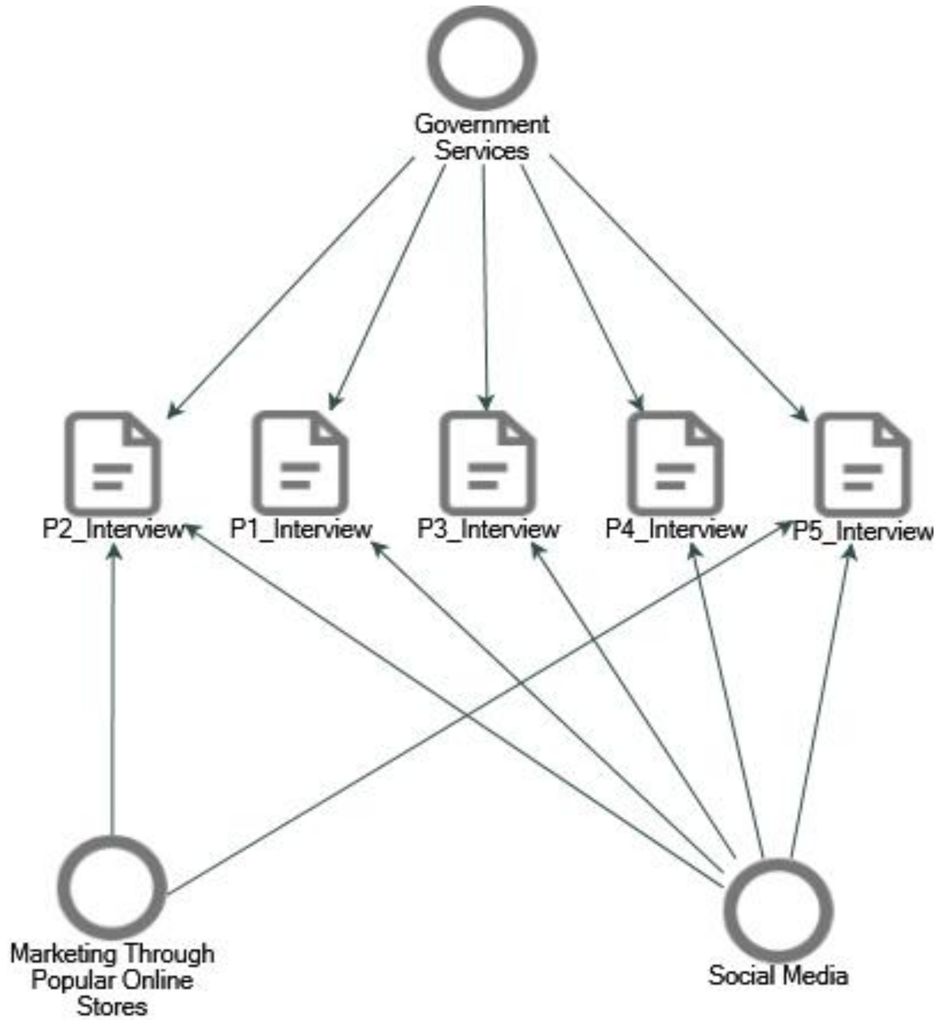

Figure 1. Emerging themes.

Based on data analysis, I found three emerging themes (Table 1). The three emerging themes were (a) utilizing social media as a marketing strategy, (b) using government SME online business certification platforms, and (c) making sales through third-party online stores. Among those three emerging themes, the overarching theme was using the Instagram application as a marketing strategy.

Theme 1: Utilizing Social Media as a Marketing Strategy

The use of social media as a marketing strategy to increase retail electronic commerce sales was a consistent and direct answer from all participants. Participants stated that they used social media to promote products and attract a wide range of customers. Participants explained that they used social media platforms as a marketing strategy due to their popularity among Saudi customers. Participants indicated that their sales volume increased after using social media platforms as they were able to promote their products to a wide range of Saudi customers. Responding to interview questions 1 and 7, participants stated that to increase their retail electronic commerce sales, they used one or more of the following social media platforms: Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat. P1, P2, and P4 explained how they benefited from social media platforms as they were able to inform followers about offers and new products. The three participants also used social media platforms to launch marketing campaigns. P1 and P3 used social media platforms to engage customers in two-way communications, which helped both participants closing sales deals. P5 stated that through social media, he was able to reach customers from other cities in Saudi Arabia and got orders from them. P2 and P5 had a common statement regarding the use of social media as a marketing strategy. They summarized that social media gave them exposure to more Saudi customers by using lower marketing costs compared to traditional marketing strategies. P5 explained that through social media, he received purchase requests from new customers who are not among his followers and not even on his current customers' list.

Instagram was a common social media platform that all five participants used as a marketing tool. The second social media platform was WhatsApp, and the third was Snapchat. Each participant used one or more social media platforms at the same time. However, the common choice among the five participants was the use of the Instagram application. I entered interview transcriptions into the Nvivo data vitalization tools to create a word cloud of the recurring terms (Figure 2). The word cloud included repeated terms and words such as *Instagram, WhatsApp, government websites, online stores, strategies, trust, challenges, marketing, increasing, resources,* and *followers.*

Figure 2. Word cloud of repeating terms from semistructured interviews.

Instagram. Instagram is a social media platform people use to share photos, videos, stories, and messages with others (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Until April 2019, the number of Instagram active users was 802 million (Aji, Nadhila, & Sanny, 2020). The five participants stated that they used Instagram as a marketing tool. The five participants stated that they were able to increase their retail electronic commerce sales by using

Instagram. Anderson (2016) explained how users could instantly exchange messages individually or in groups using the Instagram Direct feature. Also, the five participants used Instagram to increase current customer loyalty and attract new ones. P1 and P3 explained how they utilized Instagram to know customers' feedback about new products' features and prices. P1, P2, P3, and P4 started their electronic commerce and online sales using Instagram. By using Instagram, P3 and P4 were able to engage customers in two-way communication. P1 and P2 stated that by using Instagram, they were able to establish two-way communication channels with customers and know their requirements, which is consistent with the literature review findings (Kim & Drumwright, 2016). P2 stated that by using Instagram as a marketing tactic, he achieved better results with lower cost compared to traditional marketing strategies. Literature review findings were consistent with the P2 approach of using social media to create an inexpensive marketing promotion (Richardson, Choong, & Parker, 2016).

Participants were able to increase electronic commerce sales and the number of followers by using different Instagram services and tactics. P1 and P4 were continuously updating their Instagram profiles by posting new professional photos and features of products. P3 and P4 used an Instagram advertisement paid service in which they were able to advertise their Instagram accounts to new customers who are interested in their products. P3 used Instagram story services to attract new customers. Also, P3 followed other Instagram accounts of similar businesses as a tactic to find and attract potential customers.

WhatsApp. WhatsApp is a social media platform that people use to exchange text messages, video clips, and photos (Maheshwari & Baishya, 2019). Also, people use WhatsApp to make voice calls, video calls and create groups to share and exchange information. By late 2017, there were around 1.5 billion active WhatsApp users around the world (Abualrob & Nazzal, 2019). The five participants stated that they used WhatsApp as a communication tool to engage customers. Maheshwari and Baishya (2019) explained how Indian entrepreneurs used WhatsApp as a part of their marketing strategy. P1 and P2 used the WhatsApp auto-reply message service to promote their Instagram accounts and reply to customers' sales orders. P1, P2, and P3 explained that some customers prefer to use WhatsApp to initiate their sales orders. P1, P2, and P3's practices are consistent with the literature review findings of using WhatsApp to implement a viral marketing tactic. WhatsApp users unintentionally spread messages in unexpected growth paths that reach a wide range of customers (Fouad, 2017). WhatsApp users tend to resend messages spontaneously, which results in the rapid distribution of information to a large segment of society (Fouad, 2017). WhatsApp users can upload a short video using the WhatsApp status feature, and the people in the contacts list can play this video. Only P3 used the WhatsApp status feature to promote new products. WhatsApp groups feature allows the interaction between group members. However, none of the five participants used the WhatsApp group feature to create interaction between their customers. This finding contradicts some researchers' findings in which they stated that marketing managers could achieve higher customer satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty by encouraging the interaction between customers (Fehrer, Woratschek, Germelmann, & Brodie, 2018).

Alignment with the conceptual framework. The findings regarding the utilization of social media platforms are in alignment with the DOI theory. According to Rogers's (2003) DOI theory, business leaders communicate innovation to customers through specific channels. Social media is a strategy of innovation diffusion in which managers communicate products' information to customers (Yahia, Al-Neama, & Kerbache, 2018). The use of social media platforms as marketing tools is in alignment with the DOI theory (Hu, Lin, Qian, & Sun, 2018). Therefore, the utilization of social media platforms to promote products is in alignment with the DOI theory. In this theme, the five participants utilized one or a combination of different social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp to communicate the product's information to customers and initiate sales. This theme is in alignment with DOI theory in which the originator [managers] communicate innovation to the recipients [customer] through specific channels [social media].

Theme 2: Using Government Small and Medium-Size Enterprises Online Business Certification Platforms

Questions number four and five of the interviews were about the challenges and solutions that participants encountered during the implementation of their strategies. Following are questions four and five:

4. What were the key challenges you encountered in adopting the strategies for the electronic commerce business to increase retail sales?

5. How did you address the key challenges of adopting the electronic commerce business to increase retail sales?

Customers’ trust to buy products from the participants’ electronic commerce channels, especially social media, was the main challenge that all the five participants encountered in implementing their strategies. Traditionally, marketing managers consider price an issue that directly impacts customers’ purchase intention. However, in electronic commerce, business, trust has a potential impact on customers’ purchase intention (Shareef et al., 2019). Participants explained that when they first used online sales channels, they were unknown to new customers, especially those out of their regions. P1 stated that when you adopt online marketing, you will be interacting with customers, suppliers, and competitors from anywhere in the world. P1 added online customers prefer to deal with known suppliers based on their previous experience to avoid fraud. P2 and P3 explained that their customers did not trust dealing with them since they were new in online electronic commerce, and customers have no experience with their products and after-sales services. P3 and P4 explained that some customers prefer using the pay on delivery option to avoid any money transaction with new suppliers and avoid any delay in delivery. P3 and P4 said that new customers prefer to pay on delivery option due to trust. P5 stated that he had to register for some government services to increase his credibility for new customers.

The Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Investment launched the Maroof website as an initiative to support electronic commerce in Saudi Arabia. Maroof is a government’s website to certify online Saudi businesses as legal and trustable to deal with. Through the

Maroof website, customers can access different services such as license validation of the online store, raising complaints against online stores, evaluating online stores, know the return and refund policies for each online store. Using the Maroof website to overcome the challenge of customers' trust was a consistent and direct answer from all participants. Using the Nvivo data vitalization tools, I created a diagram illustrating how the five participants used government websites to overcome the customers' trust challenge. Participants explained that by using Maroof, they were able to add their social media accounts, websites, and communication numbers. P1, P3, and P4 demonstrated that their electronic commerce sales increased after registering on the Maroof website. P5 explained it was clear that I have to register in Maroof to gain customers' confidante and trust to make their payment transactions through our company website. The five participants explained that registering in Maroof is a successful strategy for Saudi SME managers to increase their electronic commerce sales.

Alignment with the conceptual framework. The findings regarding the strategy of utilizing the Maroof website to increase electronic commerce sales and promote products are in alignment with Rogers's (2003) DOI theory. According to Rogers's DOI theory, business leaders communicate innovation to customers through specific channels. The participants informed potential customers about their products through a specific channel, which is the Maroof website. In this theme, the five participants utilized the Maroof website to gain customers' trust and confidence to increase their electronic commerce sales. This theme is in alignment with DOI theory in which the originator [managers] communicate innovation to the recipients [customer] through specific channels [the government website Maroof].

Theme 3: Making Sales through Third-Party Online Stores

Utilizing third-party online stores to promote products and increase retail electronic commerce sales was a consistent and direct answer by two participants: P2 and P5. Each of the two participants contracted with one or more of the popular online stores in Saudi Arabia to increase their electronic commerce sales and promote their products. Both participants contracted with Souq and Noon online stores. Amazon owns Souq online store. Amazon is one of the international companies that stepped into the Arabian Gulf markets by accruing the UAE leading online retail company Souq.com in May 2017 for $280 million in cash (CITC, 2017). However, the Saudi Public Investment Fund and the emirates businessman Mohamed Alabbar own Noon (CITC, 2017). In September 2017, the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia representatives and Mohamed Alabbar launched Noon.com, a one-billion-dollar online store (CITC, 2017). Noon is the region's first Arabic electronic online store (CITC, 2017).

Participants P2 and P5 utilized third-party online stores as a marketing channel for three reasons. The first reason is to benefit from the third-party online store popularity to reach a wide range of customers in Saudi Arabia and Arabian Gulf Cooperation Countries [Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and United Araba of Emirates]. The second reason is to benefit from the marketing and advertising services of the third-party online stores. The third reason is to reduce marketing and advertising cost. P2 and P5 selection to contract with locally popular online stores that meet customers' habits in the way products are displayed is in alignment with the literature review (Richardson et al., 2016).

Both P2 and P5 stated that by utilizing third-party online stores, they were able to increase their retail electronic commerce sales as well as enhancing their marketing and customer care experiences. P2 and P5 explained that through Souq and Noon online stores, they were able to attract new potential customers to their social media channels and websites. SME Managers could use different outsourcing forms to enhance their marketing plans and provide customers with a better experience (Kranzbühler, Kleijnen, & Verlegh, 2019). Promoting products in popular online stores enabled P2 and P5 to know customers' feedback and comments. Managers adopt electronic marketing to gain many advantages such as two-way communication with customers to know their opinions and feedback about the company's products or services (Bolos et al., 2016). P5 benefited from the high traffic of third-party online stores to increase product exposure and increase sales. According to P2, he provided competitive prices as the cost of promoting products through third-party online stores was lower than traditional advertising and marketing costs.

The two participants, P2 and P5, noted that they did not have marketing experience to develop and execute online marketing strategies. P2 stated that building an online website needs resources, and target customers will take time to know and trust the website. Also, P2 added that our product range is limited, and customers prefer popular online stores where they can find a variety and different categories of products. P5 stated that customers trust dealing with well-known online stores such as Souq and Noon. By using third-party online store advertisements services, P5 was able to promote his products and increase sales volume. P5 explained that based on the agreement that he signed with the third-party online shop representatives, they charged him a percentage over the product's price that customers buy through their website. P2 explained that against a premium over the initial percentage, he was able to increase sales by utilizing a provision in the contract that allowed him to position his product as a priority result of the store search engine. P2 and P5 utilization of the third-party online store's marketing resources to increase retail electronic commerce sales align with the literature review (Kranzbühler et al., 2019). Also, the P2 and P5 strategy of using third-party online stores to improve customer engagement are in alignment with the literature findings (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2017).

Alignment with the conceptual framework. The findings regarding the strategy of utilizing third party online stores to increase electronic commerce sales and promote products are in alignment with Rogers's (2003) DOI theory. According to Rogers's DOI theory, business leaders communicate innovation to customers through specific channels. Promoting and selling products through third-party online stores is an innovation diffusion technique in which managers communicate products' information to customers (Yahia et al., 2018). Rogers identified the late majority as the people who adopt an innovation based on others' successful experiences (Rogers, 2003). Therefore, according to Rogers, P2 and P5 are late adopters as they relied on the success of the third-party online stores. This theme aligns with the DOI theory. The two participants, P2 and P5, used and experienced new technology to increase their retail electronic commerce sales and inform customers about their product.

Saudi SME managers could benefit from the literature review and the study findings to develop effective strategies to increase retail electronic commerce sales. Saudi SME managers could build their strategies by adopting one or a combination of the study emerging themes: (a) utilizing social media as a marketing strategy, (b) using government SME online business certification platforms, and (c) making sales through third-party online stores. One possible strategy is utilizing social media platforms to attract target customers (Yahia et al., 2018). SME managers shall identify the popular social media platform among target customers and use them to promote products and services (Richardson et al., 2016). For example, in Saudi Ariba, some of the popular social media platforms are Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat. However, a popular social media platform in one country is not necessarily popular in another country. According to the literature review, managers adopt electronic marketing to gain many advantages such as two-way communication with customers to know their opinions and feedback about the products or services (Bolos et al., 2016). Two-way communication is one channel that managers use to gain customers' trust (Abed, 2018). According to Abed, SME managers may benefit from social media platforms to engage customers in two-way communication. Abed (2018) conducted a study exploring factors that affect customers' buying intentions in Saudi Arabia. Abed found that trust and social media, especially Instagram, were the most significant factors affecting Saudi customers' buying intention. Another finding of this study was that Saudi SME managers could increase customer trust by registering their companies on the government website Maroof. To increase retail electronic commerce sales, Saudi SME managers could combine the literature review and the study findings to develop effective strategies. Saudi SME managers could develop their strategies by (a) utilizing the Instagram platform to influences customers' buying intentions and (b) registering on Maroof websites to gain customers' trust.

Utilizing third-party online stores to increase retail electronic commerce sales was one of the study findings. According to the literature review, utilizing third-party online stores to increase retail electronic commerce sales is in alignment with Kranzbühler et al. (2019) findings. SME managers could utilize third-party online stores to promote products and services and reach a wide range of customers (Sorkun, 2019). SME managers could benefit from third-party online store reputation, customer trust, low transaction cost, and high trading traffic increase retail electronic commerce sales (Thitimajshima, Esichaikul, & Krairit, 2017). Therefore, Saudi SME managers could combine the literature review and the study findings to increase retail electronic commerce sales by adopting third-party online stores as a marketing and sales strategy. Saudi SME managers may start online businesses by contracting with some existing popular online stores such as Amazon and Noon. After building experience in electronic commerce, Saudi SME managers could start their online stores. However, I recommend continuing with third-party online stores as additional marketing and sales channel. SME managers may consider adopting third-party online sores' if they are in the business stage of not having the required online marketing and advertising skills.

To increase retail electronic commerce sales. SME managers and entrepreneurs could consider the three emerging themes in this study and find the best combination that suits their capabilities and markets. Also, SME managers and entrepreneurs may consider building their marketing strategy utilizing social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat and contracting with third-party online stores such as Amazon and Noon. SME managers and entrepreneurs could develop a consortium of social media platforms and third-party online stores to increase retail electronic commerce sales.

Application to Professional Practice

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore how Saudi small business managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. The applications of this study to professional practice included providing knowledge to Saudi SME managers and owners to apply different marketing strategies for increasing retail electronic commerce sales. By referring to the findings of this study, there are three emerging themes (a) utilizing social media as a marketing strategy, (b) using government SME online business certification platforms, and (c) making sales through third-party online stores. Saudi SME could increase retail electronic commerce sales by adopting one or a mix of these emerging themes.

One of this study's findings was using social media as a marketing strategy to increase retail electronic commerce sales. Saudi SME managers could benefit from some of the popular social media platforms in Saudi Arabia to promote and sell products. Also, customers could reach a wide range of customers in Saudi Arabia and other neighboring countries such as the United Arab of Emirates and Bahrain. Another finding of this study was promoting and selling products through third-party online stores. Saudi SME managers could utilize third party local popular online stores such as Souq and Noon to increase retail electronic commerce sales. By promoting and selling products through third-party online stores, Saudi SME managers could achieve three benefits (a) reaching a wide range of customers, (b) experts support in online marketing and advertising, and (c) reduce the marketing and advertising costs.

This study's findings are valuable to Saudi SME managers and valuable to Saudi government officials and researchers interested in understanding and exploring retail electronic commerce in Saudi Arabia. Referring to the literature review section of this study, scholars indicated that there is a research gap in how Saudi SME managers could increase retail electronic commerce sales (Abed et al., 2015; Basahel & Khoualdi's, 2015). Scholars may refer to this study to fill in the research gap in the literature and conduct studies to help Saudi SME managers to expand their businesses. The Saudi government’s national transformation vision includes long-term strategies and action plans supporting SME's growth to increase the sector GDP contribution to reach 35% of the total GDP by 2030 (SMEA, 2017). One strategy of the Saudi national transformation vision is supporting electronic commerce adoption by SMEs and customers. Therefore, Saudi policymakers could benefit from this study information and findings to explore how Saudi SMEs could increase their retail electronic commerce sales.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the potential of expanding the economic growth of local communities by creating new jobs for electronic commerce supporting businesses. The following are some examples of these electronic commerce support businesses: (a) home-based sellers, (b) local supply chains, (c) local distribution channels, and (d) local financial systems. By applying the study findings, Saudi SME managers could build sustainable businesses and provide stable financial incomes for employees and their families. SME managers could contribute to the local and national economies by providing stable incomes to communities (Ruskin, Seymour, & Webster, 2016). Furthermore, community individuals indirectly benefit from the growth of SEMs' businesses revenues through their increased value-added tax.

Government officials could utilize this study's findings to develop initiatives, policies, and programs supporting SME's business growth. Saudi officials could benefit from SME retail electronic commerce businesses' growth to diversify and improve non-oil revenues. One intuitive of the Saudi national transformation 2030 vision is to support SME growth. Therefore, policymakers approved different strategies supporting electronic commerce adoption by SMEs and customers. By adopting electronic commerce, Saudi policymakers are aiming to achieve different goals such as (a) supporting Saudi SME managers to expand their business internationally, (b) enhancing the local spending which attracts international investments to the country, (c) creating new jobs, (d) establishing new selling and marketing channels for home-based businesses, and (e) creating new business opportunities. Training institutes could also benefit from these study findings in developing training programs for business students and young entrepreneurs.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore how some Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. Electronic commerce is the use of the latest information and communications (IT) technologies to automate commercial transactions between B2C or B2B (Huseynov & Yıldırım, 2016; Shemi & Procter, 2018). Saudi SME managers and owners could use this study's findings to increase their retail electronic commerce sales by applying different marketing strategies. This study's findings are significant for Saudi SME managers and valuable for interested entrepreneurs in increasing their business retail electronic commerce sales. SME owners, SME managers, and entrepreneurs could adopt one or a combination of emerging themes in this research to increase their retail electronic commerce sales. The three emerging themes are (a) utilizing social media as a marketing strategy, (b) using government SME online business certification platforms, and (c) making sales through third-party online stores.

From the study literature review and the findings, I developed three recommendations that SME managers and owners could adopt to increase their retail electronic commerce sales. The first recommendation is to utilize social media platforms to attract customers. SME managers shall identify the popular social media platform among their target customers and use them to promote their products and services. For example, in Saudi Ariba, some of the popular social media platforms are Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat. However, a popular social media platform in one country is not necessarily popular in another country. Building loyalty in target customers shall be one of the SME managers' objectives when using social media platforms as a promotional channel. Therefore, Saudi SME managers could increase customers' trust and confidentiality by registering on official government websites. Also, SME managers may benefit from social media platforms to engage customers in two-way communication to measure their feedback about the company's products, offers, and services. Abed (2018) conducted a study on the factors that affect customers’ behavioral intentions in Saudi Arabia. Abed found that social influence, especially Instagram, and trust, were the most significant factors affecting Saudi customers’ behavioral intention. Saudi SME managers could combine these study findings and Abed’s findings to develop a strategy by (a) utilizing the Instagram platform to influences customers’ buying intentions and (b) registering in Maroof websites to gain customers’ trust.

The second recommendation is that SME managers could utilize third-party online stores to promote products and services. SME managers could benefit from third-party online stores' popularity to reach a wide range of customers. Also, SME managers could benefit from a third-party online store sales experience. SME managers may start online businesses by contracting with some existing popular online stores such as Amazon and Noon. After building experience in electronic commerce, SME managers could start their online stores. However, I recommend continuing with third-party online stores as an additional sales channel. SME managers may consider adopting third-party online stores' recommendations if they are in the business stage of not having the required online marketing and advertising skills.

My third recommendation for SME managers and entrepreneurs is to consider the three themes emerging in this study and find the best combination that suits their capabilities and markets. Also, SME managers and entrepreneurs may consider building their marketing strategy by utilizing social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat and a combination of third-party online stores such as Amazon and Noon. SME managers could develop a consortium of social media platforms and third-party online stores to increase retail electronic commerce sales.

Researchers publish their study findings in reputable academic journals to contribute to the existing literature (Hangel & Schmidt-Pfister, 2017). I will disseminate a one to two pages summary of the study findings to the participants. Also, I will disseminate the findings of this study through entrepreneurship conferences and seminars. I will submit a publishable summary of the study to some government sectors such as the Saudi General Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises and the local Chamber of commerce. Finally, in addition to publishing this study in the ProQuest database, I will write a scholarly article and submit it to some peer-reviewed business academic journals for publication.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study's information and findings included strategies that SME business managers could adopt to increase retail electronic commerce sales. The study also included data, information, tactics, and skills that SME managers could use to expand their businesses locally and globally. Based on the related literature reviews and this study's findings, researchers could explore the small business electronic commerce subject from different perspectives. I recommend that future researchers conduct further studies to explore other strategies that small business managers could adopt to increase their electronic commerce business's profitability and increase their sales locally and globally.

Assumptions in this study were (a) participants would understand the interview questions and would provide truthful and honest answers, (b) participants will provide updated and accurate documents, and (c) by adopting the qualitative methodology and the multiple case study approach, I will be able to provide an understanding of how Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. I explained the interview questions to participants before starting the interview. Also, I asked the participants to confirm their understanding of each question. The data collection process and the member checking technique made it clear that participants were truthful and honest when answering the interview questions. I conducted this study and developed findings using the qualitative methodology and the multiple case study approach. Considering the study population, the assumptions in this study were acceptable and accurate.

This doctoral study had three limitations. The first limitation was that participants were from three major cities in Saudi Arabia, which limited the whole country's representation. To test the transferability of this study's findings, I recommend that future researchers include different cities in Saudi Arabia in their studies. SME managers in other demographic areas may provide additional knowledge and experiences different from what participants provided in this study. I also recommend that future researchers conduct a similar study for other Arabic countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.

The second limitation was that the study was explicitly about the retail business. The implication of this limitation was that the findings were not generalizable to a larger population. Using the qualitative methodology and the multiple case study approach, I was able to develop a valuable insight into who small business managers in Saudi Arabia adopt different strategies to increase electronic commerce sales. Therefore, I recommend that researchers conduct a similar case study using semistructured or in-depth interview techniques to explore who SME managers could increase electronic commerce sales in other business firms and sectors.

The language was another limitation of this study. At the beginning of this study, I was expecting to interview participants who cannot speak English. If that was the case, then I had to translate the interview questions and the answers from English to Arabic and vice versa. However, all participants that I had interviewed were fluent in English. I recommend that researchers conduct future research using the Arabic language to collect rich and detailed knowledge from Arabic SME managers as the language barrier will not be there.

In this research study, the three delimitations were (a) participants were Saudi SME owners and managers who had been in business for more than five years, (b) participants were only SME who have successfully increase retail electronic commerce sales, and (c) the study was about SME in the Saudi retail industry. All participants were Saudi SME owners in the retail business, had been in business for more than five years, and successfully increased retail electronic commerce sales. Delimitations were controlled and limited the scope of the study.

I recommend that researchers conduct quantitative correlational studies to test the significance of the relationship between variables, such as the adoption of mix social media platforms and the sales volume. Researchers also could conduct future studies using a mixed-method approach to collect rich data through interviews while testing the significance of quantitative analysis variables. Finally, I recommend that researchers conduct studies to explore how SME managers benefit from Saudi Arabia's 2030 vision initiatives to expand their business locally and globally.

Reflections

The DBA Doctoral Study journey was challenging and demanding, yet it was a great learning experience. Through my DBA doctoral journey at Walden University, I gained knowledge and an in-depth understanding of the small electronic commerce business. I learned different skills from the DBA research process, such as conducting a literature review, question data, synthesizing articles, finding related peer-reviewed articles, and writing using academic writing standards. One important lesson that I have learned throughout this journey was that I shall always take the knowledge and findings from a peer-reviewed reference.

To mitigate and limit personal bias, I developed and adopted an interview protocol (Appendix A). I based the protocol principles on asking open-end questions, stay focused on the subject, follow rather than leading participants, ask participants to review notes and interpretations. Also, to eliminate preconceptions of findings and ideas, the study participants were SME managers whom I did not meet or contact before.

I started the program with one goal in mind. My goal was to gain knowledge from a respectful university to help young entrepreneurs build their new businesses. I will conduct free seminars and training courses for young Saudis as a contribution to my society. I also had a plan to travel to poor and developing countries to conduct free seminars in electronic commerce for young entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore how some Saudi SME managers increase retail electronic commerce sales. To ensure data reliability and validity, I used the methodological triangulation technique to collect data from two sources: semistructured interviews and company websites. I conducted semistructured interviews with five Saudi SME managers who were able to increase their retail electronic commerce sales. Also, I collected data from participants' companies' websites. I used the member checking approach to confirm the participants' responses and to reach data saturation. Using NVivo12™, computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, I identified three emerging themes that participants used to increase retail electronic commerce sales: (a) utilizing social media as a marketing strategy, (b) using government SME online business certification platforms, and (c) making sales through third-party online stores. SME managers, owners, and entrepreneurs could adopt one or a mix of these themes to increase their retail electronic commerce sales. Also, the findings of this study could be applied by entrepreneurs in different small business industries. The implication for positive social change included the potential of expanding the economic growth of local communities by creating new jobs for electronic commerce supporting businesses such as home-based sellers and local supply chains. Finally, I recommend that researchers conduct studies to explore how SME managers could benefit from Saudi Arabia's 2030 vision and initiatives to expand their businesses locally and globally.

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Appendix A: Virtual Interview Protocol

Participant Selection Process:

A. Contact prospective participants by telephone. Conduct the telephone call as per the following:

- Start by greeting the participant.
- Introduce myself and give a brief about the study objective.
- Ask the participant if he is willing to contribute to the study and willing to participate in a scheduled one-to-one virtual interview using the Zoom application.
- Ask the participant to propose the interview date and time.

B. Upon agreement, interested participants will receive an invitation e-mail, including:

- A brief of the study objective
- Interview protocols
- Interview questions
- A soft copy of the informed consent form
- A request to confirm the participation by replying to the invitation e-mail and approving the consent form, "I consent."
- A request to the participant to provide his Zoom contact.
- A request to confirm the interview time and date or propose alternatives.

Interview Process:

A. Contact the participant as scheduled using the Zoom application.

B. Start the meeting by greeting the participant and thanking him for accepting to participate in the study.

C. Introduce myself and give a brief about the study objective.

D. Briefly review the consent form and allow the participant to ask questions before starting the interview.

E. Reemphasize the following to the participant before starting the interview:

   a. Participation is voluntary

   b. The interview is confidential

   c. There is no compensation

   d. Participants may withdraw at any time.

   e. The interview duration will not exceed 45 minutes.

F. Inform the participant that his company website is a secondary data source to mitigate bias.

G. Inform the participant that he will receive a summary of the published study.

H. Ask the participant permission to record the interview.

I. Start recording the interview by indicating the participant's sequential code, the date and time of the interview. Also, note the participant's sequential code, the date and time of the interview on the consent form copy, and on reflective journals.

J. Start the interview by asking questions in sequential order.

K. Always allow the participant to elaborate and add information during any time of the interview.

L. After asking the interview questions, allow the participant to add any information.

M. Inform the participant that in a few days, he will receive an e-mail including a transcript of the interview, a revised summary of the notes I take during the interview, and data I collected from his company website. The e-mail will include a request to the participants to review the e-mail contents and provide their feedback.

N. Close the meeting by thanking the participant for his contribution.

After the Interview:

A. Send an e-mail to the participant with a thank-you note. The e-mail will include a transcript of the interview, a revised summary of the notes I take during the interview, and data I collected from the participant's company website. The e-mail will include an instruction to the participants to review the e-mail contents and provide their feedback.

B. I will conduct a member checking process by contacting each participant in-person to ensure a clear understanding of his feedback and the accuracy of the data I collected.

C. I will protect electronic data with a password and store them in a home locked safe. I will store nonelectronic data in a home locked safe. I will store both electronic and nonelectronic data for a minimum of 5 years then destroy them.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What are the strategies you use to increase retail electronic commerce sales?
2. How have you assessed the effectiveness of your strategies for increasing retail electronic commerce sales?
3. What are the resources you used to implement your effective strategies for using the electronic commerce business to increase retail sales?
4. What were the key challenges you encountered in adopting the strategies for the electronic commerce business to increase retail sales?
5. How did you address the key challenges of adopting the electronic commerce business to increase retail sales?
6. What, if any, are the government's programs and services that you use to support your retail electronic commerce sales?
7. What, if any, social media channels have been most effective at increasing retail electronic commerce sales?
8. What additional information would you like to share about the strategies your organization has employed to increase retail electronic commerce sales?