

How has e-business Strategies of companies have contributed to adding value to their business by improving customer shopping experience? Case Study European Fashion Retailers

By

AKWESH ATANGA PENN

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of an MBA In
Information Management

Faculty of Business and Management

University Wales Trinity Saint David

2021





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Abstract

This study aims to analyse how the e-business (electronic business) strategies of companies have to enhance the value of the business through the improvement of customer shopping experience by considering the case study of fashion retailers in Europe. To complete this study primary qualitative research was conducted where open-ended interviews were conducted with 6 customers and 3 managers (2 customers and 1 manager each from the three fashion retail companies namely; TK Maxx, H&M and Zara). Two sets of interviews were conducted with the 6 customers and 3 managers of the three fashion retailers. The findings were determined from the thematic analysis of the responses of the customers and managers. Based on this research it is concluded that strong presence in social media (social media marketing), e-word of mouth (electronic word of mouth) , and viral marketing strategies have been the most effective in improving customer satisfaction in the fashion retail companies, however, strong presence in social media (social media marketing), e-word of mouth, viral marketing, and social influencer strategies have been the most effective in improving shopping experience of customers and value of the fashion retail companies like TK Maxx, H&M and Zara in Europe. Based on the findings of this study it is recommended to the fashion retailers such as TK Maxx, H&M and Zara in Europe to use these four e-business online strategies to enhance value of their business by improving customer shopping experience.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the Lord God Almighty, my late dad Muluh Penn, my mom Marilyn Muluh Maete steadfastly provided support and encouragement. I also dedicate this to my siblings, Affi, Teneng, Muluh and Khan whose love and support made it possible for me to pursue knowledge in its entirety.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Gladius Kulothungan as my MBA project supervisor and the MBA programme Manager. I thank him especially for mentoring me and patience in ensuring that I used the right method which was manageable in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. I would also like to thank all my lecturers Tushara Balendran, Mary March, Jia Miao, Molly Jack who all helped made my MBA journey an easy one in this pandemic. I would also like to thank the customers and managers of the three fashion retails outlets (TK MAXX,ZARA AND H&M) who were able to sacrifice time to do an skype and WhatsApp interview with me.

I would finally like to show gratitude all my close friends for their advice and moral support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Background

Customer experience is known as the holistic perception of customers that consumers perceived from their experience of shopping from a particular brand or organisation (Terblanche, 2018). It is considered as a result of customer interaction with the business. The interaction is done by companies with the help of customer service, navigating customers to the website or store, and the way of receiving their products or services. In a traditional business environment based in brick-and-mortar shops, the experience customers perceived is easier to provide in comparison to online businesses. This is because the offline based experience of customers is visual and realistic. Concerning the issues, e-businesses (electronic businesses) have come with online strategies that can help them in adding value to the customer shopping experience (Kasasbeh, Harada, & Noor, 2017). Some of the common strategies implemented by e-businesses (electronic businesses) are a simplified user interface, a strong presence in social media, offering special subscriptions, e-word of mouth, viral marketing, social influencer strategy and the use of augmented reality.

Today the online shopping experience of customers is changing rapidly. Opinion leaders, social networks, recommendation algorithms and other technologies are greatly influencing all stages of the purchase process. Consumers today are increasingly reliant on their smart devices to make their purchase decisions (Cheung et al., 2015). The growing adoption of smart devices and increasing ubiquity has increased the propensity of users to utilize these devices for their online shopping (Siwicki, 2014). Today the difference between m-commerce (mobile commerce) and e-commerce (electronic commerce) is not easily apparent and we have reached a point where the entire customer experience of a firm's offering has converged. Hence regardless of the medium used customers expect and need a great experience consistently no matter the area they are accessing these services from. Although a number of research articles are present on ecommerce there is limited literature available into the study of developing a unified online experience. There is also limited understanding of the different customer touch points available online and how their unique features can be leveraged to deliver a great customer experience.

Industry surveys have shown that consumers increasingly use their devices to shop from home. 80% of tablet shoppers and 67% of smartphone users use these devices to shop from their homes (Nielsen, 2014). The presence of these devices provides new and unique

opportunities for organizations to develop relationships with new customers through providing a great online experience. Consumers have access to more information today than at any point in recent history and it is critical for organizations to develop a unified experience across devices while also ensuring that constraints of the different platforms are kept in mind.

A unified approach to online marketing will enable companies to better connect with their customers and monitor their interactions throughout the entire cycle. The possibility to develop tailor made experiences for different customers through mobile devices opens up multiple avenues for organizations and hence it is critical to understand the user behaviour. Research into the customer behaviour during their interaction with company products online can provide us with deep insight on how consumers interact and respond to unified online marketing experiences. The race to gain loyal customers and attract more converts from different brands has never been more competitive and the possibilities available through use of mobile devices provide a unique battleground for organizations to compete for customer attention. However, there is a need to conduct further research to discover how customer behaviour differs in mobile and desktop environments (Nicholas et al., 2013). In view of this, this research will delve into the e-business strategies that are being utilized by different retail firms specifically by fashion industry firms in Europe.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of the research is to analyse how the business strategies of companies have to enhance the value of the business through the improvement of customer shopping experience by considering the case study of fashion retailers in Europe.

- To assess how e-business online strategies of fashion retailers enhance value of their business by improving customer shopping experience.
- To determine the positive and negative sides of e-business for fashion retailers.
- To propose recommendations regarding e-business in the fashion retail industry.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research question will be answered upon completion of this study.

RQ) What e-business online strategies of fashion retailers in Europe are most effective in enhancing value of the company through improving customer shopping experience and customer satisfaction?

1.4 Importance of the Research

This research is important because it is focused to provide useful information regarding the e-business online strategies of fashion retailers in Europe namely; TK Maxx, H&M and Zara which are effective in enhancing value of these company through improving customer shopping experience and customer satisfaction. In this way this research will fill gap present in the literature while extending the empirical literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter of the research focuses on the theoretical information and literature associated with the topic. The chapter will discuss the literature based on the objectives of the study. The areas that will be discussed in the chapter are the concept of the customer shopping experience, online business strategies of e-retailers that are adding value to their businesses through enhancing the customer shopping experience, the positive and negative side of e-business by the fashion retailers, and the role of e-business strategies on providing value to the customers.

2.2. Concept of customer shopping experience

The customer shopping experience is a phenomenon that is entirely dependent on the adoption of strategies by the organisations and their effectiveness to provide satisfaction to the customers. According to Choi, Yang, Yang, & Cheung (2015), delivering a positive experience of shopping to the customers is important for organisations. With the provision of a better experience to the customers, businesses can increase their customer retention rate as well as positive reviews from the customers. Simultaneously, positive reviews help a company to reduce the frequency or friction of receiving returns and complaints from customers. In a traditional business based on offline or brick and mortar shops, providing a great experience of shopping to the customers is easy. In brick-and-mortar shops, customers can perceive and feel their shopping experience as the products available there are visible in realistic mode. However, providing a better experience of shopping to the customers is quite difficult for the business operating on the online platform (Bilgihan, Kandampully, & Zhang, 2016). Considering the issues, online businesses have focused on adopting innovative strategies that can help them in delivering a good experience to the customers.

In accordance with Izogo & Jayawardhena (2018), customer shopping experience is related to the concept of customer psychology. Customer psychology defines a concept that describes why people purchase a product. From the perspective of business, it is considered a tool that is used to explain the aspects that businesses want from customers. While the intention of customer to purchase a product in an online shopping platform is dependable on the convenience of shopping, easy to find products, simplified user interface, mobile friendly userface, options to choose a product by considering the size, colors, etc. (Wong & Wei, 2018). Availability of a wide range of products as well as convenient customer service also plays a key role in providing an effective shopping experience to the customers in the online

platform. Delivery or shipment of products, as well as suitable options for payment, is also related to the shopping experience of the customer.

2.3. Customer brand experience

The experience of the brand and the impression on it developed by the customers after going through the entire buyer's journey is defined as the customer experience. This includes the experience gained during all phases of the purchasing process such as pre-purchase, consumption and post-purchase steps. All aspects of the experience i.e. sensory, cognitive, behavioral responses during the customer journey forms part of the overall customer experience. During the pre-purchase stage the pleasure received from the thought of enjoying future events is a critical part of the customer experience. This customer experience also culminates in the post-purchase stage where the memories developed from these experiences play an important role in determining future purchase behaviours. Many firms focus on ensuring the development of an attractive customer experience in order to generate customer loyalty and gain competitive advantage over their peers (Badgett et al., 2007). Hence the developed experience is a strategic goal for a majority of the companies operating in the economy (Johnston & Kong, 2011). The phenomenon of customer experience has been greatly researched in academia and business. According to Verhoef et al. (2009) the Customer Experience is of a social, physical, cognitive and affective nature and it is important that the entire experience is holistic. The entire customer experience of a product is not just about consumption but also the utilitarian value it generates (Vargo and Lusch, 2006). The entirety of the experience is highly complex as it reflects the customer reactions to all contact with the product/company be it direct or indirect (Gentile et al., 2007).

2.4. The growth of e-commerce, social media, and smartphone technology

Online sales growth has jumped exponentially reaching \$1 trillion in sales worldwide for the first time in history and growing 21.1% over the previous year (eMarketer, 2013). Growth of e-commerce is more pronounced in developed countries (AlGhamdi et al., 2012) such as the United States where online sales make up 8% of the entire retail sales generated in the country (Indvik, 2013). In the future we can safely assume that ecommerce sales will overtake retail sales made by traditional brick and mortar stores. Today e-commerce is not just a complementary part of business but is part of the strategic business goals. This has been made possible by the rapid advancement of technology which has led to the development of

smaller hand-held devices that are faster, efficient and cheaper than their previous incarnations.

Today large desktop computers are no longer the main way to access the internet but have been replaced by smaller all-in-one desktop PCs. These devices incorporate all aspects of the large desktop computers inside a small flat screen. Laptops also have evolved into thin and light ultra-books while other devices such as smart phones and wearable smart devices have made access to computing power and the internet wherever a customer is present. Large scale adoption of these devices has also made them cheaper to produce due to economies of scale hence leading to even faster adoption by the customers. Through these devices the growth in internet use and the number of mobile users has risen greatly leading to rapid growth in mobile based ecommerce businesses (Lu and Su, 2009).

The smart devices connect to the internet via WiFi as well as 3G/4G/LTE connections provided by mobile service companies. These network services allow providers to deliver internet services within a coverage area. With such high-speed connectivity these smart devices can be used by their users to surf the internet, watch short videos online, play games and place online orders. They can also use the connectivity to listen to music, podcasts or read news and books. The latest smartphones come with technologies that can be used as virtual wallets (credit cards). These technologies such as NFC (used by Apple Pay) can be used as payment methods at multiple locations. It is estimated that shopping via mobile devices will be the main method through which consumers purchase goods and services online (O'Dell, 2010).

Shopping using mobile devices is now becoming part of the daily consumer lifestyle and hence companies are working rapidly to develop the best methods allowing customers to easily discover, review and purchase their goods online (Siwicki, 2014). The use of mobile devices at home allows customers to carry out detailed research during their decision-making process. Customers use this connectivity to learn about features of products, read reviews and compare different offerings of multiple companies. This ease of use has led to purchases using mobile devices to overtake other methods of ordering online (Siwicki, 2014).

2.5. The added value of fashion retailers

According to Ažman & Gomišček (2015), the firms operating across the fashion industry intends to provide added value to the customers for differentiating their products and services along with increasing the probability of sales. The value represents the perception of the

customers regarding the worth of a product or service in comparison to the possible alternatives available in the market. The fashion retailers focus on maximising the perceived value of the customers by considering multiple factors including the cost and quality of the products along with the customer service. As per Srinivasan, Anderson, & Ponnnavolu (2002), the value provided by the companies provides an incremental benefit to the customers by consuming the product in exchange for the monetary value. The fashion retailers have undertaken the strategy of reducing the cost of products while selling online due to the lower cost of establishment and maintenance of the stores along with increasing the focus on quality for ensuring customer satisfaction and loyalty (Ažman & Gomišček, 2015). The fashion retailers intend to deliver high-quality customer service for increasing their value parameters and increasing the satisfaction of the customers. The fashion retailers have undertaken strategies like using virtual trial rooms powered with augmented reality technology along with the use of chatbots and data analytics for increasing the value perception of the customers. This enables the customers to try the products online for reducing confusion and doubts along with receiving 24/7 service and chat assistance for helping with their queries (Srinivasan, Anderson, & Ponnnavolu, 2002). The integration of website analytics and artificial intelligence chatbot tool also enables the customers to receive a list of recommended products based on their past product searches and purchase.

2.6. Assessment of e-business online strategies that adds value via the improvement of customer shopping experience.

The study of Kumar & Anjaly (2017), claimed that customer shopping experience is a phenomenon that has the capability of adding value to the businesses. With a positive customer shopping experience, a business can add value in terms of increased customer loyalty, increased customer satisfaction along with the word mouth strategy and positive reviews in the online platform. These aspects are valuable for companies to maintain growth in the market as the presence of strong customer loyalty, customer satisfaction leads to an increase in customer retention and sales. Customer loyalty is a concept that explains the tendency of customers does repeat business with a particular firm or brand. Customer loyalty is a result come from positive customer satisfaction. While customer satisfaction is about the customer's happiness with the product, service of a company which can be provided with a good customer shopping experience.

The major difference of shopping from offline and online businesses has enforced e-businesses to adopt strategies that can help in added value through the improvement of the shopping experience. According to Khan & Uwemi (2018), technological advancement has made it easier for e-businesses to adopt strategies for improvement of customer shopping experience. Artificial Intelligence has become a major contributor to the improvement of customer shopping experience. With the adoption of artificial intelligence, companies are introducing new technology like Chatbot to deliver a good quality of customer services. A chatbot is a software application that simulates human conversations through an interaction between customers and machines. Through the application, customers can have formal conversations and raise queries or basic complaints against the services or products purchased. The strategies based on Artificial Intelligence or AI is helping the e-businesses to provide quick solutions to the customers. Oliveira & Toaldo (2015), commented that basic aspects of customers purchasing intention from e-businesses are to receive quality service before and after-sales. Customers tend to ask for the features of a product along with the price related queries which the e-commerce business can deliver using Chatbot and without problems as well. Delay in shipping, receiving wrong products, the issue with the quality of products is related to ongoing and after sales service to the customers. In such a case, the companies use Chatbot to deliver basic solutions.

The theory of Reasoned Action can be considered to describe that customers always look for receiving a particular outcome from a business. If such intention of customers does not meet with the basic features of products, then the problems arise. For this reason, e-businesses have considered using Chatbot to deliver better customer satisfaction and shopping experience to the customers. Along with the strategies of using Chatbot, e-businesses also focusses on the use of augmented reality. By using augmented reality as a part of technological strategies, e-commerce businesses are able to provide options for trial and a realistic sense of shopping. The study of Omar, Saadan, & Seman (2015), claimed that many customers do not prefer to purchase from e-businesses due to a lack of trial options. The author also explained that the use of augmented reality has made it easy for e-businesses to provide a realistic shopping experience and added value to customer satisfaction thus adding value to the businesses as well.

However, Fayad & Paper (2015), argued with the fact and commented that augmented reality cannot provide satisfaction that the customers can perceive from offline shopping. The author claimed that the augmented reality or 3D technology that is used to deliver such an experience is not up to the standards that consumers can have from offline shopping.

Customer loyalty program is another vital strategy adopted by the e-businesses to deliver better satisfaction to the customers. Customer loyalty program of online businesses involves subscription, special discounts like birthday discount codes for customers on their birthday as well as special sale for the customers who purchased a particular product. The program ensures online businesses to increase customer retention while satisfying the regular customers receive extra benefits (Choi, Yang, Yang, & Cheung, 2015). With the customer loyalty program, companies can provide free of cost delivery, extra discounts, and access to early sales. Such strategies become the reason for adding the value of customer satisfaction to the experience of shopping, increasing sales and thus adding value to the business as well. The strategies are also attractive for customers to purchase products at a good rate and access to unique products.

2.7. Positive and negative sides of e-business in fashion retailers

Shopping for fashion products from online platforms provides both positive and negative experiences to the customers. Not only the customers but businesses also have the implication of both positive and negative aspects of online platforms. According to Kautish & Sharma (2018), the requirement of less setting up charges and operational cost is the core benefit for e-businesses that is associated with an online business. The author claimed that online-based organisations can set up their stores with the development of the website and mobile applications where the need for expertise is also less. On the other hand, offline businesses required places to set up their stores and recruitment of staff to manage the stores. Considering the factor, the author has also claimed that online businesses can start a business without problems and that too with the availability of a wide range of products (Dahana, Miwa, & Morisada, 2018). Added to the factor, it is also found in research that set-up costs of online business can be done with the help of consultancy firms or freelancer who helps in developing business. The freelancer or consultancy firms also charge a minimal amount from the clients that are advantageous for online-based retail businesses. On the contrary, online businesses also have negative sides related to the presence of high competition in the market (Bilgihan, Kandampully, & Zhang, 2016). In contemporary times, most fashion retailers have focused on shifting their business to the online platform. Thus, the competition in the platform has also been increased ever since the increase of businesses in the online platform. The shift of offline fashion retail business in the online platform has the positive aspects of availability and a wide range for the customers and business both. With the presence of

business in online platforms, firms can be able to reach out of their offline areas. Especially, the business from the SME sector has made it profitable to expand their reachability to the customers (Kaushik, Kumar, Gupta, & Dixit, 2020). With the strategies of introducing business in online platforms, sales of the businesses also increase. While the customers find the opportunity to choose and purchase products from a wide range of options. Considering the fashion retail business, it can be said that the customers can be able to check their preferred products' size, price even fittings. The use of augmented reality-based 3D technology empowers the customers to choose their preferred products and trial through the virtual world. Although purchasing fashion items with such an approach also have certain weak or negative aspects (Goswami, 2015). For example, the inability to check the quality of the products and feel by touching the products is quite difficult. Based on the Reasoned action theory, it can be said that the customers look for good quality fabric as their preferred outcome cannot be satisfied with the online shopping experience of fashion products. Moreover, e-commerce transaction is vulnerable to cybercrime.

Promotion is a big part of the businesses which is also applicable to fashion retail. Promotional activities cost a high amount to the businesses and thus the organisations always look for the cost-effective medium of a promotional campaign. In this case, the affiliate program as well as promotion through social media is simplified for the online business (Yeung & Ang, 2016). This is because the use of social media and affiliation program is easy for the business based on the online platform. The presence of the IT team made it easier for online businesses as the team can work collaboratively for both the management of e-commerce websites and social media promotion. Influencing customers as well as informing them about the introduction of new products also becomes easier for companies with these promotional approaches. On the other hand, trust issues are also a negative aspect related to the online fashion retail business. Perceiving the products create trust among the customers that cannot be generated in online platforms (Khan & Uwemi, 2018). The e-businesses involve large and SMEs in the fashion retail business. Though large businesses can ensure the quality and trust to purchase a product it is quite difficult for the SMEs to generate trust among the customers. Issues with trust are a concern for the small and medium-size fashion retailers to attract customers and sell their products.

2.8. Role of e-business strategies on adding value to the customer shopping experience in fashion retail.

E-business strategies of using 3D or augmented technology have become a trend for the customers of fashion retail business. With the technology or strategy, businesses can deliver a realistic experience to the customers. Regarding the technology, Nugroho (2019), claimed that the use of technology made it easier for the customers to purchase products at their preferred time and trailing a similar fashion item with a different color. In the modern-day, time is a big concern for the earners who went for shopping. The strategy of using 3D technology for the trial of the customers has become beneficial for the companies to enhance the footfall earning consumers. With the option, customers also feel satisfied as their valuable time is not occupied for the fashions or such work. Another crucial technology used in online fashion retail is Chatbot. Using the technology businesses can deliver quick solutions to customer problems and their queries regard to products as well. If customers are unable to find a specific fashion item's preferred size then they can have interaction with the chatbot to receive further information (Dahana, Miwa, & Morisada, 2018). Payment is another crucial aspect for online-based fashion retail businesses which can face issues of failure. In such a case, customers can raise queries or complaints without problems. The problems can be raised by the consumers in a particular option in the online platform. This approach helps organisations assure customers of quick solutions and avoiding receiving negative feedback from the customers.

2.9. The online strategy of online fashion retailers

IMRG (2006) concluded in their study that internet-based or online fashion retailing was likely to be unsuccessful at the beginning of the e-commerce industry, this was due to the fact that people were habitual to try and touch the clothes they buy and also a social experience interlinked with shopping clothes for females. However, online selling volumes of footwear and clothing have gradually increased revenues of online fashion products have been increasing since 2000 at a rate of 25-30 percent annually (IMRG, 2006). Littlewoods direct.com, GreatUniversal.com, and LandsEnd.com as catalogue and early online clothes “pure-play” retailers are significantly pushed by an online retailer “brick and mortar” as these companies build an online presence in different channels and establish their own multi-channel strategy. These fashion retailers have acknowledged the offering of their services and also expand the presence of their brands through online channels to provide their customers

with a brand experience with more choices and flexibility. A steady increase in the area of research concerned with fashion e-tailing has occurred in previous years, with regards to the increase in consumer spending on fashion products online (Rowley, 2009).

Marciniak and Bruce (2006) presented a chapter “Fashion e-tailing” that indicates that most researches in the domain of e-tailing are associated with behaviour of cross channel shopping and issues in consumer behaviour. Quality and design of fashion websites and approaches of fashion retailers regarding online strategy have been explored by other researches. Though in some researches branding and brands are mentioned occasionally, online branding was not focused by any research. The increasing brand value recognition, particularly in the retail sector, is emphasised by the study of Ailawadi and Keller (2004), including brand status among four popular topics of discussion within the discussion forums of style and fashion. A study by Thomas and colleagues (2007) also suggests that, within fashion retailing, exploration of online branding is a time-consuming task. The study of Chen and He (2003) adds that there is a positive and direct impact of brand knowledge on the intention of online retailer adoption. Moreover, the study of Park and Stoel (2005) reveals that purchase intention is influenced by this brand familiarity.

However, the study of Rubenstein and Griffiths, (2001) describes that limited investigation of theory regarding online branding and brands have two possible reasons. The role and importance of brands within online channels are regarded as the first ambivalence. Most researches claim that with a digitized world awash in information, brands have become increasingly relevant for preserving the time of the customer by lowering the costs of searching and assisting with making purchase decisions in an environment overloaded with options, lack of personal interaction, and rife with the transition. Nevertheless, the research of Rowley (2004) also describes that customers can liberate themselves from the shorthand of brand with a wealth of knowledge at their fingertips, combined with sophisticated search engines and comparison pages, according to the alternative viewpoint. The study of Danaher et al., (2003) provide evidence that, according to other researchers, web experience, share of brand market, and category of a product can all influence the importance of online brands. A further difficulty in studying online branding is that it necessitates an analysis of existing branding concepts and unique opportunities presented by the online platform. Either practical advice and tips or academic, online branding discussion appear to be a mix of branding theories, experience, strategy, and also the delivery and design of experiences of e-commerce and e-service.

A vast number of strands have been observed in the research of the online strategy of fashion retailers operating online. In addition, the study by Salmeron and Hurtado (2006) also suggested that increased sales, ease of purchase from customers, and most significantly, for certain purposes, amplification of brand awareness are the strategic goals of fashion retailers as they grow their e-commerce offerings. Salmeron and Hurtado (2006) have proposed several stages models of fashion designers for making an online presence, and Ashworth et al., (2006) proposed the same for small fashion e-tailers.

An extensive study conducted by Marchiniak and Bruce (2004) analysed that 780 websites of fashion retailers based in the UK were examined with the aim of determining the relationship between the category of fashion retailers and also online involvement level. The majority of transactional retailers became product specialists who were autonomous, multiple, pure-play, or mail-order retailers, while designers of fashion retailers primarily use the websites as just an informative resource. It is also found in the analysis of Rowley (2009) that the websites of many of the leading 'non-value retailers have enabled customers to make purchases, providing additional options for brand experience and engagement. The utilisation of the internet to convey brand values and foster brand relationships is still in the process of development, whereas fashion retailers have a consistent visual identity across all platforms. There are signs of some creative activity; however, the concept of online branding still has a lot of room for growth.

2.10. Online Marketing Strategies

As the world experienced growth on the internet, marketing through online channels has gained popularity in the previous decade. It evident from the study of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) that with the passage of time, online marketing strategies help in gaining success and also fulfill the organisational objectives. Online marketing strategies are also referred to as e-marketing strategies. Moreover, the study of Cheong & Morrison (2008) argued that utilisation of different technologies within marketing developed a direct effect on marketers and consumers. Therefore, marketing through the internet is defined as having an external viewpoint that is used for transporting goods and services to customers while combining the internet with traditional media. It has resulted in a significant increase in the overall growth of several companies, and companies have also been designing online marketing strategies in response to the advancement in online marketing.

Similar outcomes have also found in the study of Ellison and Vitak (2015) that the significance of this idea and implementation of a strategy that can potentially bring consumers closer to a single brand is also a critical concept that businesses must recognize. It has resulted in a significant increase in the overall growth of several companies, and companies have also been designing online marketing strategies in response to the advancement in online marketing. The significance of this idea and implementation of a strategy that can potentially bring consumers closer to a single brand is also a critical concept that businesses must recognize. Therefore, companies should understand the behaviour and attitudes of customers regarding a particular brand without developing online marketing strategies. Companies also construct effective online marketing strategies founded on the customer's behaviour and attitude to attract them to the brand.

2.11. Purchase Intention of Online Consumers

As per the study of Laohapensang (2009) the issues that impact the customer's online purchasing intention are the main problem of online purchasing. The analysis of NECTEC and this survey study is evident that barriers are seen in online technology while purchasing online. Besides, the factor that mostly impacts the consumer's purchasing intention is consumer behaviour. Moreover, the analysis of Cho (2009) argued that consumers are more likely to understand the benefits of personalizing online clothes as well as other advantages provided by websites as customers become informed and regard them as capable and caring resources. Furthermore, when consumers recognize websites that allow personalisation as providing adequate protection for submitting details, they regard those websites to be quite helpful. However, a negative correlation of benefits of websites has with the established impression of competitive websites, which is why customers express a negative opinion of websites that allow clothing personalisation. Consumer behaviour regarding a website that may influence the brand preference of consumers was analysed in the study of Lee (2005); the study also provides a detailed prediction of consumer's choices of brands. In addition, Moon (2004) described the features that significantly impact consumers to avoid traditional shopping approaches and choose online and website methods without going to the market for purchasing and inquiring brands. A survey conducted by Tseng (2004) regarding consumer behaviour towards mobile phone advertisement and concluded that it has an adverse impression on consumers, except when the online service with an advertisement is specifically accepted by the consumer. Yang

(2004) also surveyed and found a direct relationship between consumer behaviour and the behaviours of consumers.

The study by Ha (2012) explained that for online shopping, there are four quality factors such as (content, security, experiential and service) but among them, the most critical factors that may impact online shopping satisfaction are experiential quality and website content. These factors contribute to shopping intention, whereas the factors of quality such as website's service and security may impact shopping intention only. The study by Jayawardhena (2004) explains a behavioural model of value-behaviour to analyse how consumer behaviour within online marketing could impact personal and principle values. As per the research, consumer behaviour of online marketing provides a clear prediction of consumer behaviour regarding online marketing. The relationship between personal values and behaviour is mediated by consumer behaviour.

2.12. Consumer behaviour and Online Shopping

The analysis of groups, individuals, companies and the methods they utilize to choose, protect, consume and dispose of goods, experiences, ideas or services to meet their wants and needs is known as consumer behaviour (Bagdare & Jain, 2013). It is also associated with the economic and social consequences of consumer and societal consumption and purchasing behaviour. In a formal analysis of customer behaviour, personality, demographics, behavioural and lifestyle variables like use rates, consumption event, loyalty, advocacy, and readiness to offer referrals are mostly examined in an effort to recognize the wants and consumption of people. The analysis of consumer behaviour also looks at the effects of groups like family, peers, sports, comparison groups, and culture generally on the consumer. Consumer behavioural research is concerned with certain facets of buying behaviour, through pre to post-purchasing behaviours and from consumption to evaluation. It also includes all people who are interested in buying decisions as well as consumption practices, whether indirect or direct, that may include opinion leaders and brand influencers.

A more complete definition is found in the study of Kim (2005); the study proposed that consumer behaviour regarding online stores provides a critical prediction as compare to local shopping outlets. Moreover, the intention of the consumer associated with the product from an online store may result in a strong prediction of consumer's purchase intention through internet-based stores. An interceding factor between the intention of consumers to buy and the variables of prediction was also found in the study. A similar opinion was proposed in the

study of Thananuraksakul (2007) that the factors mentioned above significantly impact the consumer willingness to purchase through an internet-based retailer.

2.13. Trust on Online Retail and Consumer Behaviour

According to the study of Ku (2012), to understand consumer behaviour through the internet, trust plays a critical role. To achieve success in the online e-market earning consumer trust is necessary. This has also been highlighted in the study of Pavlou (2002) that transactions happen online as compare to in-person transactions because of the purchasing uncertainty within the e-market. However, consumer's security and privacy are also critical in an online market. Study of Cuneyt (2004) have also repeated that online shopping could have occurred if a consumer is satisfied with the website security and see it as a safer shopping method.

2.14. Prominent theories related to online e-business Strategies

Within the literature of social media and digital marketing, several theories are frequently found, such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Social Influence Theory (SIT), Diffusion of Innovation (DOI), Social Presence Theory (SPT), and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM).

2.15.1 Social Influence Theory

The previous study of Kelman (1958) has put forward that in the literature of social media marketing, SIT is considered as one of the noticeably discussed theory. According to the theory, an individual's behaviour, beliefs and attitude can be influenced by others in three ways such as internalization, compliance, identification. Though, there are different levels of several individuals to be influenced by their behaviour, belief, and attitude. How the individual is influenced is dependent on the level of influence. If an individual is influenced by some other individual or community to gain advantage or escape punishment and displeasure, social influence emerges by compliance. Whereas, if an individual is influenced by some other individual or community to maintain a preferred role or favourable relationship through following that individual or community, social influence emerges through identity. Previous research by Kelman (1958, p. 53) has emphasised that individuals can acquire satisfaction through identification and the act of confronting. Moreover, according to SIT, internalization can establish social influence. In the case when a community or a person influences an individual and shifts his/her behaviour, the individual perceives that particular behaviour match with the value system of that individual. According

to Kelman (1958, p. 53), through following “the content of new behaviour,” satisfaction could be acquired.

2.15.2 Technology Acceptance Model

TAM has been among the main theories that explored in the literature of social media marketing suggested by Davis (1989). Why individuals utilise and adopt technologies is explained in this theory of information system. With regards to the model when the latest technology arises, the decision of the user to embrace and utilize the technology involves a number of factors, like in what ways the new technology will be adopted by its consumers and will be decided on the basis of these factors as perceived usefulness, attitude, perceived ease of use, gender, age, and intensity of use. If technology consumers see it as helpful in improving their work efficiency, they see it as valuable and prefer to embrace and use it. If technology users feel that it is convenient to use, they are likely to adopt and use it, but if technology users feel that it is difficult to use, they are much less inclined to consider and use it. As discussed in the study of Davis (1989), when people possess a favourable approach to technology and are eager to use it, they are expected to embrace and use such technology. The age and ethnicity of the customer may affect the attitude and intensity of usage.

Other considerations may also affect the technology acceptance and use by its consumers. TAM may be used to describe the adaptation/use of social media by small and medium-sized enterprises and consumers. Employing TAM in conjunction with the acceptance or usage of e-commerce and social media networks, multiple experiments have been performed.

The research work of Holsapple (2005) elaborates that the idea of perceived ease of use has been lifted to such a degree that consumers felt that if they adopted such software, they would not have to undergo any logical or physical work. As per Wei (2008), the perceived ease of use is one of the many well-known considerations for determining and finding buying intentions.

The research work of Shen (2012) discusses that a website which is engaging, attractive and equipped with decent functionality attracts more clients. There seems to be a strong positive association between the purchasing goal of the consumer and the perceived ease of use in the broad range of studies that were carried out by several researchers. Thinking favourably controls the relationship between the action of actual buying or impulsive buying. Therefore, taking into account and making assumptions based on the point of view of the huge quantity of analysis given above, therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed. Rauniar, Rawski, Handong,

and Johnson (2014) employed TAM with the purpose of researching the acceptance of social media and also the Facebook user's usage behaviour. It was discovered that perceived usefulness, ease of use, trustworthiness, and the potential of social networking websites would affect willingness to embrace and use Facebook's social network by user's. The results correlate to the TAM of Davis. The social media TAM has been updated in this analysis and has demonstrated that the above variables decide acceptance and the social media utilisation of users such as Facebook.

2.15.3 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The literature review of Azjen (2000) shows that TPB (The Planned Behaviour Theory) have been regarded as the key theory being examined to obtain an idea of any changes in behaviour that consumers are experiencing. Depending on the TPB, it is known that the behaviours are planned and that they can be expected to be employed easily by the user. It was reported in the study of Glanz Rimer, and Viswanath (2015), that on the basis of this theory the behaviour of the average person is influenced by their behavioural values, moral beliefs, and control beliefs. The Theory of Reasoned Action gives rise to this theory, which explains how people make logical behaviour and decisions that are the assessment results of their available information. Behavioural beliefs eventually end up with a positive or negative perspective about a given behaviour, normative beliefs are the conclusion of pressure of society, and control beliefs lead to control of behaviour. Once all three variables (positive behaviour, social pressure, and behavioural control) have been identified, the susceptibility of the customer to respond in a certain way has become more prominent.

2.15.4 eWOM, influencer marketing, and viral marketing

According to Huete-Alcocer (2017), due to the prevalence of the internet and social media, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has developed into a modern mode of word of mouth. Some authors such as Ahmad et al., (2018) and Sweeney et al., (2017) have also suggested that within the study of social media marketing, eWOM seems to be a generally applied theory. With regard to eWOM theory, Giuseppe, Tartaglione, Tsiakis, and Theodosios (2019, p. 173) have reported that "The eWOM theory has been extended to the case of bloggers and other social media influencers." In basic terms, eWOM can be considered as a statement that is posted by a potential or prospective client about an organization or its goods on digital media, including the sites of social media. Like the standard WOM, (Siegert, Rimscha and

Grubenmann (2017) states that eWOM is a powerful marketing tool. With respect to the study of Estrella-Ramón & Ellis-Chadwick (2017), the eWOM seems to be in the shape of content that is generated by the user and is spread through social networks and communities on social media.

It was discussed in the literature of Sweeney et al., (2008) that the EWOM could be optimistic and destructive, and companies have no influence on it. The knowledge disseminated by eWOM is deemed to be extremely accurate by customers as it is designed with no commercial motive. EWOM can promote viral marketing, and if a message of marketing is shared using eWOM at an increasing speed by social networking sites, blogs, and web channels, viral marketing is accomplished. Moreover, the behaviour and buying decisions of customers may be highly affected by eWOM. As per the observation of Estrella-Ramón and Ellis-Chadwick (2017), eWOM is regarded a user-generated material that is spread through social networks and communities on social media.

The study of Sweeney et al., (2017) highlights that together with eWOM on social media, a strategy related to influencer marketing can be used by the companies by approaching the influencers of social media to share optimistic messages regarding their goods. The influencers of social media are individuals who possess a large fan following of social media who are engaged in advertising that gives them the reputation of social media celebrities, and their fans listen to their views and are inspired. When studying the factors affecting the success of WOM, it was noticed by Sweeney et al. (2017) that eWOM has a greater risk of being viral on social media. The study of Ahmad et al., (2018) demonstrates that with social media, positive product content can disperse virally and have a positive impact on the success of social media marketing.

2.15.5 Diffusion of Innovation

Rogers (2003) states that communication of innovation takes place over time throughout society and the mechanism by which it takes place alludes to the diffusion. According to Liu et al., (2017), DOI applies to the use of technologies like digital and social media through small and medium-sized enterprises for the messages of communication marketing to aim markets and consumers. In the year 1962, the theory of DOI was introduced by Rogers and seeks to illustrate why, at what scale, and also how modern practices and technologies are adopted and disintegrated between individuals within a society. Rogers (2003) further in the study illustrates that according to the DOI, there exist around five categories of innovation depends on how early or late an innovation is adopted. Innovators are those who embrace

new technologies at their inception whereas, the laggards are among those who adopt modern technologies at very last.

Previous research of John et al., (1976) proposed SPT; according to their theory, the social presence of an individual is measured through the degree to which an individual's prompt presence is seen in the interactions with everyone. However, the extent of social presence is the main determinant of the outcome and quality of virtual interactions. More specifically, the study of Gunawardena (1995) proposed that social presence through computer-based interaction can effectively enhance audience satisfaction. Bickle, Hirudayaraj, and Doyle (2019), in their recent research, stated that an individual in virtual and online communication is considered as a real entity through SPT. From within social media presence perspective, SPT has been progressively utilised in the latest researches. In addition, the study of Jahng and Littau (2016) suggested that journalists could be aided by the social media presence in establishing trust within the audiences. Journalists with no social media presence are more unlikely to be trusted by people. The most recent study by Karampela, Lacka and McLean (2020) found that perceived quality is positively impacted by the social media presence of suppliers. However, the study by Silva, Feitosa, Duarte, and Vasconcelos (2020) found that customer engagement could be enhanced by the companies through the presence in social media. Therefore, it is evident in the previous studies that presence in social media is significant for marketing activities.

2.15. Summary

By reviewing the literature associated with the topic, it can be said that e-businesses have been emerging rapidly since the initial years of the decade. Customers' lack of time to purchase products as well as the availability of a wide range of products to choose from has influenced the growth of businesses. The use of strategies like a loyalty program, providing discounts, use of technology such as 3D has influenced the businesses to provide a better shopping experience to the customers hence increasing sales and retaining customers thus adding value and growing their businesses.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The customer shopping experience is an important parameter for determining the satisfaction levels of the clients along with increasing customer loyalty and retention. The customer shopping experience is an important factor for online shopping and e-commerce as the customers tend to change their decision making and purchase preferences frequently due to the perceived experiences of purchase and ease of accessibility of the E-Commerce websites. This chapter of this study presents the research methodology for the investigation comprising of the methodologies and techniques selected for answering the research questions by referring to the research onion of Saunders. The onion research framework is consist of six layers, all the layer of the onion research are interdependent. Its outer most layer is related with selection of the most appropriate research philosophy for a particular research, subsequently the research approaches, strategies, choices, time horizon, techniques and procedures are selected in accordance with the research objectives as shown below in figure 1. This chapter discusses the philosophy of the investigation along with the approach and design in addition to the strategy of data collection and analysis.

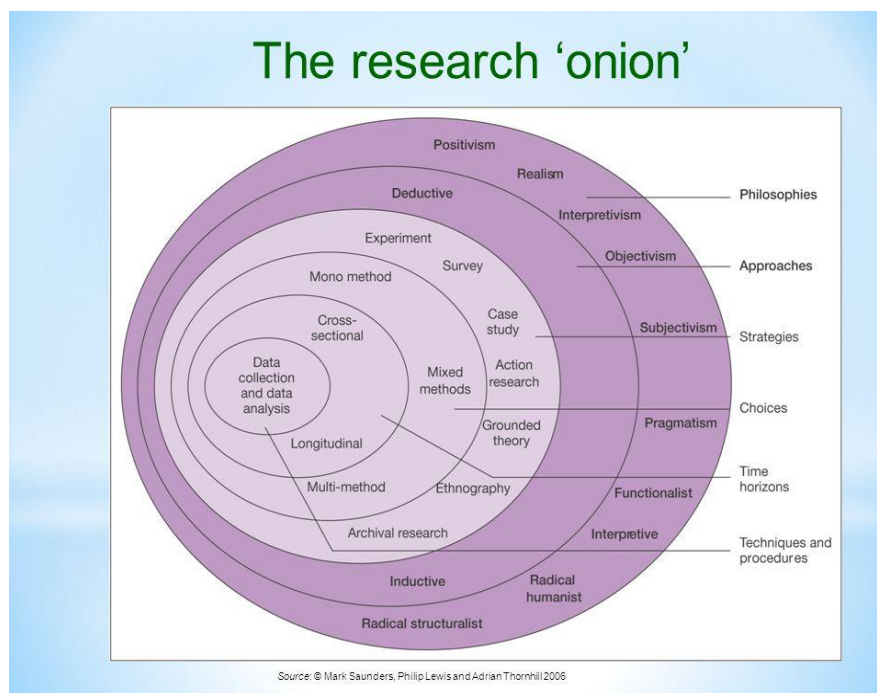


Figure 1: Research Onion.

Author: Saunders.

3.2. Research purpose

The basic purpose of any investigation is to answer the research problem and accomplish the objectives (Clarke, Tamaschke, & Liesch, 2013). The purpose of the research is to analyse how the business strategies of companies have to enhance the value of the business through the improvement of customer shopping experience by considering the case study of fashion retailers in Europe. Accomplishing the following objectives has been the motive for the research:

- To assess how e-business online strategies of fashion retailers enhance value of their business by improving customer shopping experience
- To determine the positive and negative sides of e-business in fashion retailers
- To propose recommendations regarding e-business in the fashion retail industry

Upon the accomplishment of the above-stated research objectives which is the primary purpose of the investigation. The completion of the research will provide answers to how the online strategies of fashion retail firms have enhanced the value of their businesses through improving customer shopping experience.

3.3. Research philosophy

Research philosophy dictates the assumptions of the researcher regarding formulating the strategy of the investigation along with the perspectives of the investigator (Flick, 2015). This research will be conducted by following the interpretivist philosophy (also known as interpretivism) because it is based on multiple external realities where researcher can understand world according to their personal interpretations and understanding. Interpretivist research philosophy is justified for this research as it enables the possibility of working with qualitative data alone so that in-depth views of the respondents can be obtain to answer the research questions (Mackey & Gass, 2015). The positivism research philosophy has not been selected in the investigation due to the requirement of flexibility in terms of choice of data collection methods (Saunders, 2011). The pragmatism philosophy has not been selected as it focuses on both quantitative and qualitative data.

3.4. Research Approach

The research approach is the framework that allows the investigator to determine the course of conducting the investigation (Creswell, 2002). The research was conducted with the inductive approach which is generally used for qualitative research. This research approach is

justified because in this study qualitative research is intended to be used. A deductive approach was avoided because of absence of quantitative data and hypothesis testing. No hypothesis is statistically tested in this present study.

3.5. Research Design

Research design represents the general plan for the investigation that presents an account of the procedures that are undertaken for solving the research problem. Saunders (2011) suggested different research design which can be used to conduct a research namely; exploratory design, causal design, cross-sectional design, descriptive design, and experimental design. Descriptive research design is based on collection and analysis of data in description form. It enables the researcher to find of how, when, what, where, who aspects of a research question. However, it cannot be used to answer why or for finding causal relationships based on the analyzed results (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

This research regarding the analysis of the e-business strategies of fashion retail companies for adding value to the business and enhancing the shopping experience of the customers was pursued with the exploratory design (Doherty & Dickmann, 2012). The choice of the research strategy is justified as there is insufficient research regarding the analysis of the factors of value addition for the online fashion retail companies with their e-business strategies and the subsequent influence on the customer shopping experience. Moreover, the exploratory research strategy is appropriate to use with qualitative research, which is the case in this present study. The exploratory research strategy will be beneficial for analysing the relationship of cause and effect among the online e-business strategies of fashion retailers and business value, shopping experience.

A descriptive research design has been avoided due to the consideration of primary data sources in the investigation whereas the explanatory design has been chosen as it undertakes the process of in-depth explanation of the research components (Martínez-López, Gázquez-Abad, & Sousa, 2013). The exploratory research design will facilitate the investigator to explore the new elements regarding the investigation along with altering their progress pattern of the research as per the requirements.

3.6. Research Strategy

The research strategy indicates the plan of researching by undertaking specific activities that are to be completed within a designated time. Quantitative and qualitative research strategies

are two research strategies which can be used in a research. These two research strategies where used together are referred as mixed research strategy. However researchers can use only one of the two research strategies to suit their research objectives. This research was conducted by using a qualitative strategy as the researcher wanted to consider only qualitative information (Maxwell, 2012). The qualitative strategy is justified for the investigation as it collect and analyses the qualitative perspectives of the customers and the managers of the fashion retail companies. However, in the qualitative strategy it is necessary to ensure that the bias is eliminated by keeping personal views of the researcher away from influencing the outcome of the research.

3.7. Data Collection Methods

The data collection procedures and the choice of methods is an important aspect of the research as it influences the quality of findings and the ability to meet the research questions (Olsen, 2011). The research will be conducted by considering both primary and secondary data sources for arriving at the findings. There can be two methods for collecting primary data, namely; qualitative and quantitative. Where quantitative data can be collected by using closed ended questionnaires and qualitative data can be collected by using open ended interviews. However, there are some limitations of using interview research method. For instance, the interviews are time consuming and may be costly due to which it is not a suitable method to obtain data from number of respondents. Its results could also be affected by the researcher's biases (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, in situations where in-depth views and open ended responses are to be collected then it is ideal to use open ended interviews to collect primary data. In this study the primary data for the research was collected from qualitative sources for increasing the availability of information and enhancing the quality of analysis for the researcher. No quantitative data was collected in this study. For primary qualitative data collection three retailers namely TK Maxx, H&M and Zara were selected.

The qualitative data was collected by conducting online interviews with a small sample of two customers and one manager from each of the three fashion retail companies, where the interviews that were conducted over Skype. The interview questions were open-ended and will allow elaboration and expression of the perspectives of the customers and the managers. The inclusion criteria for the interview will be the customers of the company who have purchased products in the last one year whereas the inclusion criterion for the interviews was

a minimum of two-year experience for the managers. The research also included data gathered from secondary information sources like academic publications in books and research journals along with company publications and reports.

3.8. Data Analysis

The data collected from the interview responses was analysed using interpretative technique and thematic analysis to address the research objectives regarding shopping experience in the online platform. The interpretative technique will be used to interpret the qualitative responses from the interviews of the customers and the managers. Using thematic analysis the similar themes present in the responses of the respondents will be identified, and bring together to express as research findings. However, no statistical analysis such as Microsoft Excel or IBM SPSS will be used because no quantitative analysis was used in this study. Moreover, the data collected through the interview will be further compared and contrasted with the findings of the past literature review. The findings from the primary and secondary data will be compared for enhancing the reliability and authenticity of the findings along with understanding the differences in the organisational strategies and the factors of enhancing customer experience.

3.9. Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of the overall respondents in research for the ease of analysis and reduction of time and cost by preserving the authenticity of the findings by drawing inferences about the population. The small sample size for the interview participants was selected, where two customers from each the three retail companies and one manager from each the three retail companies will be selected. The strategy of purposive sampling will be considered for intentionally selecting some of the participants due to their vivid shopping experiences and record of accomplishment of repeat purchases from the companies through the years (Emmel, 2013). As per (Bryman & Bell, 2011) purposive sampling is commonly employed in qualitative research. The choice of purposive sampling is justified as the researcher is hoping to be able elucidate the differences in shopping experience before the Covid-19 pandemic by visiting the retail stores and switching to the online mode during and after the pandemic.

3.10. Reliability and Validity

The findings of the research will hope to be reliable due to the ability to provide similar results if the techniques are repeated. This is due to the purposive sampling which has been selected for the selection of the participants to feature based on the purposive sampling method for increasing the authenticity and reliability of the findings (Baumgarten, 2013). The choice of qualitative methods limits the validity of the research because of absence of statistical data analysis, however the construct and content validity of the interview questions were ensured by developing the interview questions on the basis of the reviewed literature. Moreover, the choice of using past research sources also validates the evidence found in the past research regarding customer experience in the fashion industry and the impact of e-business strategies.

3.11. Ethical Considerations

Various ethical considerations have been acknowledged during the course of this research. It is required that formal approval and informed consent of the participants is obtained prior to data collection (Saunders et al., 2012). They are necessary to be informed about the intended purpose of the research and the use of the information they provide (Johnson, and Christensen, 2010). Therefore in this research only the respondents who were willing to participate had been included and format approval had been obtained before commencing data collection process. They were informed about the intended purpose of their provided information and confidentiality of data and identity was maintain. There had been no pressure or influence over the respondents. Moreover the data and all the information that had been used in the research were kept anonymous. The reason for keeping this information anonymous was to ensure that the research or its findings does not target or jeopardise any individual's rights and employment (Silverman, 2011). Personal biases of the researcher were also set aside while interpreting the data to ensure that this research is reliable. All hard copies of the data will be shredded after completion of this research.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Two sets of interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data. First set of interviews were conducted with 6 customers (2 customers each from the three fashion retail companies; TK Maxx, H&M and Zara), while the second set of interviews were conducted with 3 managers (1 manager each from of the three fashion retail companies; TK Maxx, H&M and Zara). In this chapter the interview responses collected from the 6 customers and 3 managers were analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis. The similar themes present in the responses of the customers and the managers are identified, compared, contrasted and bring together to determine research findings. Moreover, the past literature is also compared with the findings of this study to identify if the research findings of this study corresponds or contradicts with the existing empirical literature.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis of the Interview responses of the customers of the three fashion retail companies

The interview responses of the 6 customers (2 customers each from the three fashion retail companies; TK Maxx, H&M and Zara) were thematically analysed in this section, where the answers provided by the 6 customers for each of the interview questions were presented in tables and were then interpreted. There were 10 questions in each of the interviews conducted with 6 customers. The first two questions (Q1 and Q2) were based on demographic and were asked to identify the age and gender of the interviewed customers as shown in the following table 4.1 and table 4.2 given below.

Table 4.1 Customers responses to interview question 1

Q1. What is your age?	Customers' responses
TK Maxx Customer 1	39 Years
TK Maxx Customer 2	25 Years
H&M Customer 1	43 Years
H&M Customer 2	47 Years
Zara Customer 1	34 Years
Zara Customer 2	29 Years

The analysis of the interview responses of the customers to the question 1 indicated that the age of the customers who participated in the interviews was from 25 to 47 years. This

indicates that the respondent customers included adults of young and middle age. However, teenage and old customers were not included in the interviews. This shows that the interview responses represented the views of the young and middle age online customers.

The second question of the interviews with the 6 customers was focused to find out their genders. It was found that 3 of the customers were males while the remaining 3 were females as shown in table 4.2 given below. This indicated that the male and female customers had equal representation in the interviews and so the customer answers are balanced in terms of gender based biases.

Table 4.2 Customer responses to interview question 2

Q2. What is your gender?	Customers' responses
TK Maxx Customer 1	Male
TK Maxx Customer 2	Female
H&M Customer 1	Female
H&M Customer 2	Male
Zara Customer 1	Female
Zara Customer 2	Male

In question 3 of the interviews the customers were asked if they prefer shopping from fashion retailers or directly from the fashion brands. The results given below in table 4.3 indicates that 4 of the customers stated they prefer shopping directly from the fashion brands, however two of the customers stated that they prefer shopping from fashion retailers. It means that most of the fashion brand customers prefer shopping directly from the fashion brands instead of the fashion retailers retailing various fashion brands.

Table 4.3 Customer responses to interview question 3

Q3. Do you prefer shopping from fashion retailers or directly from the fashion brands?	Customers' responses
TK Maxx Customer 1	Yes I prefer shopping from the fashion retailers
TK Maxx Customer 2	Yes I prefer shopping from fashion retailers
H&M Customer 1	Yes I prefer shopping directly from the fashion brands
H&M Customer 2	Yes I prefer shopping directly from the fashion brands

Zara Customer 1	Yes I prefer shopping directly from the fashion brands
Zara Customer 2	Yes I prefer shopping directly from the fashion brands

In question 4 of the interviews the customers were asked if they prefer online shopping or in store shopping for your fashion outfits. It was found that three of the customers has stated that they prefer in store shopping for fashion outfits, however the remaining three of the customers has stated that they prefer online shopping for fashion outfits. This indicated that half of the interviewed customers prefer online shopping for fashion outfits.

Table 4.4 Customer responses to interview question 4

Q4. Do you prefer online shopping or in store shopping for your fashion outfits?	Customers' responses
TK Maxx Customer 1	I prefer in store shopping for fashion outfits
TK Maxx Customer 2	I prefer online shopping
H&M Customer 1	I prefer in store shopping for fashion outfits
H&M Customer 2	I prefer in store shopping for fashion outfits
Zara Customer 1	I prefer online shopping
Zara Customer 2	I prefer online shopping

In question 5 of the interviews the customers were asked, what has been your experience so far and the changes you noticed within the past one-year shopping online from your fashion retailers (TK Maxx or H&M or Zara). The answers of the customers given below in table 4.5 indicates that most of the customers of these fashion retailers have noticed that within the past one-year shopping online trend has increased as people are frequently using online shopping now, and it has become easier to shop online from their fashion retailers namely; TK Maxx, H&M and Zara. Adding to fashion retail shops closing down due to lockdown rules and social distancing and travelling restrictions when COVID19 lockdown rules where eased has contributed towards increasing online shopping demand.

Table 4.5 Customer responses to interview question 5

Q5. What has been your experience so far and the changes you noticed within the past one-year shopping online from your fashion retailers (TK Maxx or H&M or Zara).	Customers' responses
TK Maxx Customer 1	Increase in online shopping
TK Maxx Customer 2	Shopping online have become easier
H&M Customer 1	People are more frequently using online shopping now
H&M Customer 2	Online shopping demand has increased
Zara Customer 1	There was an increase in online shopping during past one-year
Zara Customer 2	Online shopping have become mainstream during COVID19 as people prefer to buy online due to social distancing and traveling restrictions

In question 6 of the interviews the customers were asked, what are the things your fashion retailer (TK Maxx or H&M or Zara) has done in the past one-year to improve shopping experience from its website or app. It was found that one of the customers of TK Maxx fashion retail did not find any significant change in the past one-year in its website or app to improve on shopping experience. However, in view of the remaining 5 customers of TK Maxx, H&M and Zara fashion retail to improve customer shopping experience in the past one-year these fashion retailers have made improvements in their website and app loading speed, they have made it easier to search/navigate products on their website, and have made their website and app more mobile friendly than before.

Table 4.6 Customer responses to interview question 6

Q6. In your opinion what are the things your fashion retailer (TK Maxx or H&M or Zara) has done in the past one-year to improve on your experience shopping from its website or app.?	Customers' responses
TK Maxx Customer 1	Didn't find any significant any change

TK Maxx Customer 2	It has made its website more user friendly
H&M Customer 1	It is easier to search products on its website
H&M Customer 2	It is faster to load its website and app on mobile
Zara Customer 1	Its website and app is now more mobile friendly than before
Zara Customer 2	Its website and app has improved its loading speed

In question 7 of the interviews the customers were asked, if they think their fashion retailer (TK Maxx or H&M or Zara) has got enough online presence within the past one year that has increased the perception of the customers regarding its worth in comparison to other online fashion retail outlet. The answer of the customers of TK Maxx, H&M and Zara indicated that the online presence of these fashion retailers within the past one year was not enough because they were unable to fulfil all online orders. Due to limited order fulfilment capacity of these fashion retailers, they were unable to meet demand of the online customers and customers had to wait for days to place their online orders or receive their orders.

Table 4.7 Customer responses to interview question 7

Q7. In your opinion do you think your fashion retailer (TK Maxx or H&M or Zara) has got enough online presence within the past one year that has increased the perception of the customers regarding its worth in comparison to other online fashion retail outlet?	Customers' responses
TK Maxx Customer 1	The TK Maxx was unable to fulfil all online orders and customers have to wait for days before they can place orders.
TK Maxx Customer 2	In comparison with other online fashion retail outlets the TK Maxx online presence was limited within the past one year. It has introduced daily order limits due to which customers were unable to order once the order

	limited was reached.
H&M Customer 1	The H&M have limited online presence in comparison with other online fashion retail outlets.
H&M Customer 2	The H&M does not have enough online presence to meet all customer orders at once.
Zara Customer 1	Within the past one year the online presence of Zara was not enough.
Zara Customer 2	The online presence of Zara was not enough to maintain its market share and so it needs to improve its online presence to compete against its rival brands.

In question 8 of the interviews the customers were asked, how would they describe shopping from the online platform of their fashion retailers (TK Maxx or H&M or Zara), is it easy or it is complex, and if they are satisfied with the platform or not really satisfied. The answers given below in table 4.8 shows that all of the customers of the three fashion retailers were satisfied with the online platform of their fashion brands because they was easy to use and were not complex.

Table 4.8 Customer responses to interview question 8

Q8. In your opinion how would you describe shopping from the online platform of your fashion retailer (TK Maxx or H&M or Zara)? Is it easy or it is complex? Thus, would say you are satisfied with the platform or not really satisfied?	Customers' responses
TK Maxx Customer 1	The online platform of TK Maxx website is not complex so I am satisfied with it.
TK Maxx Customer 2	It is easy to use the online platform but it is slower than other online platform, but I am considerably satisfied with it.
H&M Customer 1	The online platform of H&M is easy and so I

	am completely satisfied with it.
H&M Customer 2	In comparison with other online platforms of fashion retailers the H&M online platform is not easy to use.
Zara Customer 1	It is easy to use its online platform and so I am satisfied.
Zara Customer 2	I am satisfied with the online platform of Zara.

Subsequently in question 9 of the interviews the customers were asked, what do you think are the benefits of using E-business transactions while shopping from the online platform of your fashion retailer (TK Maxx or H&M or Zara). The answers provided by the customers to this question are given below in table 4.9. In customers' view, convenience, ease of use, time saving, travelling cost saving, instant buying, and cost comparison are the benefits of using e-business transactions while shopping from the online platform for their respective retailers.

Table 4.9 Customer responses to interview question 9

Q9. What do you think are the benefits of using E-business transactions while shopping from the online platform of your fashion retailer (TK Maxx or H&M or Zara)?	Customers' responses
TK Maxx Customer 1	I think it is convenient and easy to use E-business transactions while shopping from the TK Maxx online platform.
TK Maxx Customer 2	I save time and efforts by shopping from the TK Maxx online platform.
H&M Customer 1	Cost comparison can easily be made amongst different fashion outfits
H&M Customer 2	Convenience, ease of use, and time saving is possible
Zara Customer 1	From online platform shopping can be done instantly use E-business transactions without moving an inch
Zara Customer 2	It helps in saving time and travelling cost

In the last question of the interviews the customers were asked what do they think are the drawbacks of using E-business transactions while shopping from the online platform of your fashion retailer (TK Maxx or H&M or Zara). The answers given below in table 4.10 shows that the drawbacks of using E-business transactions while shopping from the online platform include; inability to touch and physically check the quality of the products, inability to identify product defect, vulnerability to cybercrime, time wasting in returning order and refund processing if product has a defect and negative reviews can influence perception and buying decision.

Table 4.10 Customer responses to interview question 10

Q10. What do you think are the drawbacks of using E-business transactions while shopping from the online platform of your fashion brand (TK Maxx or H&M or Zara)?	Customers' responses
TK Maxx Customer 1	The quality of the products cannot be checked physically
TK Maxx Customer 2	The drawback of using E-business transactions is that it is subjected to cyber crime
H&M Customer 1	The credit card details can be stolen by the cyber criminals while carrying out e-commerce transaction
H&M Customer 2	The online products cannot be touched or examined
Zara Customer 1	Product defect cannot be identified online and if there is a defect it takes some time to return order and actually get your refund proceed
Zara Customer 2	Negative reviews can influence perception and buying decision

4.3 Qualitative Analysis of the Interview responses of the managers of the three fashion retail companies

The interview responses of the 3 managers (1 manager each from the three fashion retail companies; TK Maxx, H&M and Zara) were thematically analysed in this section, where the answers provided by the managers for each of the interview questions were presented in tables and were then interpreted. There were 9 questions in each of the interviews conducted with the 3 managers. In question 1 the managers were asked what is your designation and as shown in table 4.11 it was found that three managers were; Brand Marketing Manager from TK Maxx, Marketing Manager from H&M, and Digital Marketing Manager from Zara. This indicates that the managers that were interviewed from the three fashion retail companies (namely; TK Maxx, H&M and Zara) were all marketing managers.

Table 4.11 Managers responses to interview question 1

Q1. What is your designation?	Managers' responses
Manager 1 (TK Maxx)	Brand Marketing Manager
Manager 2 (H&M)	Marketing Manager
Manager 3 (Zara)	Digital Marketing Manager

In question 2 the managers were asked have your company within the last one year adopted e-business strategies to enhance the value of business by improving customer shopping experience. It was found that all of the managers were of the opinion that; making their online platforms more mobile and user friendly, introduction “buy now pay later” strategy with payment platforms like PayPal, Clear Pay and Klarna , social media marketing strategy, e-word of mouth strategy, and viral marketing strategy are some of the e-business strategies used by their companies to achieve online sales growth, meet increase online customer demand, and improve customer shopping experience.

Table 4.12 Managers responses to interview question 2

Q2. Has your company within the last one year adopted e-business strategies to enhance the value of business by improving customer shopping experience?	Managers' responses
Manager 1 (TK Maxx)	Yes, e-business strategies such as social media marketing and e-word of mouth were used to achieve online sales growth.

Manager 2 (H&M)	Yes, our company tried to use social media marketing, viral marketing strategies to meet increase online customer demand, Making the platform more user friendly with easy checkouts and the buy now pay later with Klarna to improve customers shopping experience
Manager 3 (Zara)	Yes social media marketing, viral marketing, and social influencer strategies were employed to improve customer shopping experience to address the increase in online demand on newly growing fashion trends as well as Making the platform more user friendly with easy checkouts and the buy now pay later with Klarna and PayPal

In question 3 the managers were asked what E-business online strategies have been introduced within the last one-year period to enhance the value of the business as a fashion retail outlet. It was found that TK Maxx has introduced e-word of mouth strategy, while H&M has introduced viral marketing strategy, and Zara has introduced viral marketing and social influencer marketing strategies within the last one-year period to enhance the value of the business as a fashion retail outlet.

Table 4.13 Managers responses to interview question 3

Q3. What E-business online strategies have been introduced within the last one-year period to enhance the value of the business as a fashion retail outlet?	Managers' responses
Manager 1 (TK Maxx)	Social media marketing strategy
Manager 2 (H&M)	E-word of mouth and viral marketing strategy
Manager 3 (Zara)	Viral marketing and social influencer marketing strategies

In question 4 the managers were asked how effective these E-business online strategies has in the improving customer shopping experience with regards to the feedback you get. It was found that the social media marketing, e-word of mouth, viral marketing and social influencer marketing strategies were effective in improving customer shopping experience.

Table 4.14 Managers responses to interview question 4

Q4. How effective has these E-business online strategies been in the improving customer shopping experience with regards to the feedback you get?	Managers' responses
Manager 1 (TK Maxx)	The feedback was mainly positive from customers which shows that the social media marketing strategy was effective in improving customer shopping experience
Manager 2 (H&M)	E-word of mouth and viral marketing strategy has been successful and effective in improving customer shopping experience evident as sales and customer retention has increased
Manager 3 (Zara)	Customer shopping experience have been improved by using viral marketing and social influencer marketing strategies as we have had a lot of positive feedback and our sales have increase over the last year.

In question 5 the managers were asked what e-business strategies have been the most effective in improving customer shopping experience in your company within the last one year. It was found that social media marketing, e-word of mouth, viral marketing strategies and making platforms more user and mobile friendly have been the most effective in improving customer shopping experience in their various fashion retail companies.

Table 4.15 Managers responses to interview question 5

Q5. What e-business strategies have been the most effective in improving customer	Managers' responses
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shopping experience in your company within the last one year?	
Manager 1 (TK Maxx)	Social media marketing and E-word of mouth and until recently making our online platform more user friendly
Manager 2 (H&M)	E-word of mouth on Social media and making our platform more user and mobile friendly
Manager 3 (Zara)	E-word of mouth and viral marketing strategies

In question 6 the managers were asked what e-business strategies have been the most effective in improving customer satisfaction. It was found that social media marketing, e-word of mouth, and viral marketing strategies have been the most effective in improving customer satisfaction in each of the fashion retail outlets.

Table 4.16 Managers responses to interview question 6

Q6. What e-business strategies have been the most effective in improving customer satisfaction?	Managers' responses
Manager 1 (TK Maxx)	Social media marketing and E-word of mouth
Manager 2 (H&M)	E-word of mouth on Social media
Manager 3 (Zara)	E-word of mouth and viral marketing strategies

In question 7 the managers were asked what have been the positive sides (benefits) of e-business in fashion retail industry in Europe. The answers of the managers given below in table 4.17 shows that the positive sides (benefits) of e-business in fashion retail industry in Europe include; ease of use, convenience, instant buying, time saving, cost saving, discounts, special offers, access to updated information, and ease of price comparison.

Table 4.17 Managers responses to interview question 7

Q7. What has been the positive sides	Managers' responses
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(benefits) of e-business in fashion retail industry in Europe	
Manager 1 (TK Maxx)	Easy access to updated information, instant buying, time saving, and cost saving
Manager 2 (H&M)	Ease of use, cost saving, ease of price comparison, discounts
Manager 3 (Zara)	Convenience, easy to use, time saving, cost saving, special offers, cost comparison

In question 8 the managers were asked what have been the negative sides (drawbacks) of e-business in fashion retail industry in Europe. The answers of the managers given below in table 4.18 shows that the negative sides (drawbacks) of e-business in fashion retail industry in Europe include; vulnerability to cyber crime, product texture and quality cannot be checked online, and negative reviews of customers which can negatively influence brand image and perception as well customer retention.

Table 4.18 Managers responses to interview question 8

Q8. What have been the negative sides (drawbacks) of e-business in fashion retail industry in Europe?	Managers' responses
Manager 1 (TK Maxx)	Vulnerability to cyber crime
Manager 2 (H&M)	Product texture and quality cannot be checked by customers
Manager 3 (Zara)	Negative reviews of customers can negatively influence brand image and perception and makes it difficult for customer retention.

In the last question the managers were asked which of the strategies of e-business have been the most effective in enhancing value of the company through improving customer shopping

experience, as shown in table 4.19. The thematic analysis of the answers indicated that the four e-business strategies have been most effective in enhancing value of the company through improving customer shopping experience; a strong presence in social media strategy, e-word of mouth strategy, viral marketing strategy, social influencer strategy and simplified user interface or user friendly platforms.

Table 4.19 Managers responses to interview question 9

Q9. In your opinion which of the following strategies of e-business have been the most effective in enhancing value of the company through improving customer shopping experience in the past one year? 1) Simplified user interface, 2) A strong presence in social media, 3) Offering special subscriptions, 4) Use of augmented reality, 5) E-word of mouth, 6) Social influencer strategy, 7) Viral marketing.	Managers' responses
Manager 1 (TK Maxx)	The following strategies have been most effective in improving customer shopping experience; A strong presence in social media, E-word of mouth, and viral marketing.
Manager 2 (H&M)	A strong presence in social media, Simplified user interface and viral marketing are the e-business strategies which have been the most effective in enhancing value of the company through improving customer shopping experience in the past one year.
Manager 3 (Zara)	A strong presence in social media Viral marketing Social influencer strategy Making the platform User friendly.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In this section the findings are concluded while addressing the research objectives. The past literature is also compared with the findings of this study to identify if the research findings of this study corresponds or contradicts with the existing empirical literature. The aim of this study was to analyse how the business strategies of companies have enhance the value of the business through the improvement of customer shopping experience by considering the case study of fashion retailers in Europe. To achieve this aim, the following three research objectives were addressed. The first research objective was to assess how e-business online strategies of fashion retailers enhance value of their business by improving customer shopping experience. The second objective was to determine the positive and negative sides of e-business for fashion retailers. And the third objective was to propose recommendations regarding e-business in the fashion retail industry. To address these objectives primary qualitative research was conducted where open-ended interviews were conducted with 6 customers and 3 managers (2 customers and 1 manager each from the three fashion retail companies namely; TK Maxx, H&M and Zara). Two sets of interviews were conducted with the 6 customers and 3 managers of the three fashion retailers. The findings were determined from the thematic analysis of the responses of the customers and managers. The first two research objectives are addressed in the following paragraphs, while the third research objective is addressed in the next sub-section in recommendations.

Based on the thematic analysis of the responses regarding the first research objective it was found that the following four e-business online strategies of fashion retailers namely; a strong presence in social media strategy, e-word of mouth strategy, viral marketing strategy, user friendly platforms with easy checkouts and introducing the buy now pay later option and social influencer strategy have enhance value of their business by improving customer shopping experience. These strategies also enable fashion retailers such as TK Maxx, H&M and Zara in Europe to improving customer satisfaction along with improving customer shopping experience, hence enhancing their business. These findings correspondent with the past literature for instance Sweeney et al., (2017) found that eWOM and influencer marketing can be used by the companies to share optimistic messages and influence customer shopping experience.

Moreover, based on the thematic analysis of the responses regarding the second objective, the positive and the negative sides of e-business for fashion retailers have been identified. It was

found that ease of use, convenience, instant buying, time saving, cost saving, discounts, special offers, access to updated information, and the ease of price comparison are the positive sides (benefits) of e-business for fashion retailers such as TK Maxx, H&M and Zara in Europe. These findings are in line with the literature, such as Kautish and Sharma (2018) as they also found cost saving as a benefit of using e-business transaction, while Salmeron and Hurtado (2006) found ease of use as a benefit of using e-business. Regarding the negative sides (drawbacks) of using e-business for fashion retailers like TK Maxx, H&M and Zara in Europe it was identified that vulnerability to cyber crime, inability to examine and feel the product texture, quality online, negative reviews of customers time delays experienced in deliveries, returns or refund processing which can negatively influence brand image and perception are the negative sides of using e-business. These findings support the findings of Oliveira and Toaldo (2015) as they also suggested that the negative sides of using e-business retail purchase is receiving wrong products and issue with the quality of products, whereas Goswami (2015) suggested that the negative sides of using e-business is the inability to check the quality of the products and feel by touching the products.

Besides, the research question of this study was focused to find out what e-business online strategies of fashion retailers in Europe are most effective in enhancing value of the company through improving customer shopping experience and customer satisfaction. Based on this research it is concluded that strong presence in social media (social media marketing), e-word of mouth, viral marketing strategies and implementing simplified user interface have been the most effective in improving customer satisfaction in fashion retail companies, however, strong presence in social media (social media marketing), e-word of mouth, viral marketing, social influencer strategies and implementing simplified user interface have been the most effective in improving shopping experience of customers and value of the fashion retail companies like TK Maxx, H&M and Zara in Europe.

5.2 Recommendations

The findings of this study suggested that five e-business online strategies of fashion retailers namely; a strong presence in social media strategy, e-word of mouth strategy, viral marketing strategy, social influencer strategy and implementing simplified user interface can enhance value of their business by improving customer shopping experience. Therefore, it is recommended to the fashion retailers such as TK Maxx, H&M and Zara in Europe to use these four e-business online strategies to enhance value of their business by improving

customer shopping experience. Moreover, this research is limited to qualitative research and therefore it is recommended to use quantitative research as well in future research so that findings from the qualitative and quantitative research can be triangulated.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Interview (Customers)

Please answer the following questions with reference to how e-business online strategies of fashion retailers enhance value of their business by improving customer shopping experience.

Thank you!

Q1. What is your age?
Q2. What is your gender?
Q3. Do you prefer shopping from fashion retailers or directly from the fashion brands?
Q4. Do you prefer online shopping or instore shopping for your fashion outfits?
Q5. What has been your experience so far and the changes you noticed within the past one-year shopping online from your fashion retailer (Zara, TK Maxx or H&M).
Q6. In your opinion what are the things your fashion retailer (Zara, TK Maxx or H&M) has done in the past one year to improve on your experience shopping from their website or app.?
Q7. In your opinion do you think your retailer (Zara, TK Maxx or H&M) as a fashion retailer has got enough online presence within the past one year that has increased the

perception of the customers regarding its worth in comparison to other online fashion retail outlet?

Q8. In your opinion how would you describe shopping from your fashion retailer's (Zara, TK Maxx or H&M) online platform? Is it easy or it is complex? Thus, would say you are satisfied with the platform or not really satisfied?

Q9. What do you think are the benefits of using E-business transactions while shopping from your fashion retailer's (Zara, TK Maxx or H&M). online platform?

Q10. What do you think are the drawbacks of using E-business transactions while shopping from the online platform?

Appendix B - Interview (Managers)

Please answer the following questions with reference to how e-business online strategies enhance value of businesses by improving customer shopping experience in your company which is part of the European fashion retail industry. Thank you!

Q1. What is your designation?

Q2. Has your company within the last one year adopted e-business strategies to enhance the value of business by improving customer shopping experience?

Q3. What E-business online strategies have been introduced within the last one-year period to enhance the value of the business as a fashion retail outlet?

Q4. How effective has these E-business online strategies been in the improving customer shopping experience with regards to the feedback you get?

Q5. What e-business strategies have been the most effective in improving customer shopping experience in your company within the last one year?

Q6. What e-business strategies have been the most effective in improving customer satisfaction within the past one year?

Q7. What has been the positive sides (benefits) of e-business in fashion retail industry in Europe

Q8. What has been the negative sides (drawbacks) of e-business in fashion retail industry in Europe?

Q9. In your opinion which of the following strategies of e-business have been the most effective in enhancing value of the company through improving customer shopping experience?

- 1) Simplified user interface
- 2) A strong presence in social media
- 3) Offering special subscriptions
- 4) Use of augmented reality
- 5) E-word of mouth
- 6) Social influencer strategy
- 7) Viral marketing