

Retailing in an Age of Change: Lessons from the Dynamic Saudi Arabian Market

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doi:10.56397/JWE.2025.02.01

Abstract

This study examines the key factors for the survival and success of new retail stores in Saudi Arabia. Due to economic growth and population growth, the retail sector in this country has witnessed the emergence of numerous stores, many of which have faced serious challenges and have been eliminated from the competition. Using a qualitative method and interviews with 17 retail industry experts, this study identified the essential elements at the time of establishment and effective strategies for the survival of new businesses. The findings show that determining the organizational vision and mission, market analysis, choosing a strategic location, managing expert human resources and using modern technologies are among the key factors for success. Also, the use of Kaizen theory, careful financial monitoring and crisis management through the formation of working groups play an important role in the survival of these businesses. By providing practical models and applicable strategies, this study helps investors and managers of new stores to make more informed decisions and prevent potential failures. The results of this study can be used as a guide for the sustainable development of retail businesses in competitive environments and help improve the conditions of small businesses and economic development.

Keywords: retail sales, establishment strategies, Saudi Arabia, survival strategies, business environmental factors

1. Introduction

In Saudi Arabia, a country with a fast and emerging economy (Al Jaafreh & Allouzi, 2023), the establishment of various companies and stores as a way to achieve diverse goals in the business world has increased dramatically (Alessa et al., 2024). One of these businesses is retail, which has attracted the attention of many investors in recent years. For this reason, in recent years, the establishment of various retail

stores has grown significantly. Several reasons, including economic potential (BinSaeed, 2023), significant increase in population, growing tourism and sports events can be factors that cause significant growth in the establishment of new retail stores. But the current situation shows that newly established business owners have faced significant challenge such as lack of survival, which has hindered the prosperity of this sector of businesses. A review of research and field interviews conducted with retail

business owners who have left the circle of competition clearly indicates their exit from the competitive retail market (Albliwi & Alsolami, 2021; Alsolaim, 2019; Shabir & AlBishri, 2021). For this reason, not only a deep and detailed examination of the non-survival of this part of businesses is of particular importance in the field of investment and micro-businesses, but we must draw this investigation towards the survival and success of these businesses. Finding a solution to this issue can help us provide the right solutions to prevent bankruptcy and exit from the market, and thus create a brighter future for these businesses.

In this regard, a fundamental and complex issue that newly established retail stores struggle with is the lack of sufficient experience and lack of comprehensive awareness of dynamic and changing market trends at the time of establishing and starting their businesses (Hathaway, 2014; Raji et al., 2024). This lack of experience not only means ignoring emerging trends and rapid environmental changes, but also means not having effective and systematic strategies for starting a business at the time of establishment. On the other hand, not knowing the components and variables at the time of establishing a retail store can spend a lot of time and money to learn the basic principles of the business. This lack of knowledge can lead to incorrect product selection, inappropriate store location (Jaravaza & Chitando, 2013), and poor marketing planning. Another important issue that should be noted is that the establishment of businesses such as retail in traditional ways and immediate decisions are no longer possible (Gang et al., 2008), because the rapid changes in technology and its impact on society's behavior require scientific research and accurate market analysis.

For this reason, these retailers will not be able to make smart decisions due to their lack of awareness and insufficient experience in the face of competitive pressures and economic disruptions (Dixit & Chintagunta, 2007). When these challenges are aggravated in the form of self-reinforcement, investment at the time of establishment will not only lead to the exit of these stores from the market, but will also weaken the spirit of investors and owners of this sector of retail sales. In fact, the lack of awareness of the dos and don'ts at the time of establishment, the lack of adaptation to the changing market environment, and the inability

to design creative solutions, create a burning and uncertain future for these businesses. And it leads them to an irreparable fall. Therefore, when setting up retail stores, identifying the components and variables that can help the business continue and realize survival and success is a vital and necessary issue. According to this issue, a question arises in this section.

1) At the time of retail establishment, which elements and variables should be considered so that it can be the basis of survival and success?

In this regard, newly established retail stores are struggling with complexities that are rooted in the rapid and continuous fluctuations of customers' tastes and needs. The tremendous technological developments and continuous advancements in social media not only affect the behavior of consumers and customers (Demaci, 2022; Mishra et al., 2024), but also lead them to a dynamic and unpredictable environment where wants and needs are rapidly changing. This situation becomes much more difficult and challenging for newly established stores that are in the stage of forming their identity and formulating their core strategies (Hanafizadeh et al., 2020); because in the midst of continuous market transformation, they must prove their ability to adapt and respond to these increasing changes. In fact, they should not only carefully pay attention to new signs and symptoms of changes in customer behavior, but also should adopt appropriate strategies for these changes as the fundamental elements of their survival in this field. As it is known, during different periods of business, from the start stage to the maturity stage and even during the decline, the adoption of strategies should always be done under the influence of environmental factors (internal and external) (Jumaroh & Suryaningrum, 2024; Ostos et al., 2017). These factors not only affect how business owners operate and make decisions, but are considered a major challenge for these owners, especially for retailers, especially those retailers that are newly established (Yu & Ramanathan, 2012).

But because the newly established retailers lack proper strategies against these challenges, it naturally not only prevents them from progressing, but can also struggle with non-survival in the shortest possible time. In other words, in a situation where the market environment is always changing and evolving, these newly established stores face the risk of extinction in the field of competition, and

eventually they may quickly go out of the business circle and cannot continue their economic activities. As can be seen, exiting the market in newly established retailers has profound social and economic consequences (Burt et al., 2002), which go beyond harming individual business owners, leading to reduced economic development (Sahani, 2020), increased unemployment rates, and reduced national income. For this reason, in the light of instability in behaviors and norms and constant changes in technology, adopting any type of strategy with regard to environmental factors in newly established retail stores, which will cause their survival and success, is of particular importance.

Another challenge for newly established retail stores is the increasing and intense competition in this field (Du, 2023), which is considered to be an external environmental factor. Since larger and successful stores that have sufficient experience and resources and are recognized as market leaders, they are easily able to eliminate newly established retail stores that lack effective survival strategies from the competition field. This elimination can be due to the benefit of past experiences and deeper knowledge of the market, which can easily identify the weaknesses of these newly established stores and use it to strengthen their position. For this reason, retail stores that operate without knowing the correct patterns and strategy will face great challenges to survive in this competitive market. This combination of challenges and problems continuously puts a lot of pressure on these stores, and unfortunately many of them will not be able to survive and the possibility of their collapse increases. Therefore, in a situation where there are many experienced competitors in the competitive market, identifying strategies that enable survival in retail sales is a vital and necessary matter. Therefore, the owners of newly established retail stores should consider environmental factors before adopting any strategy and adopt strategies based on existing challenges (Kong et al., 2020; Ravichandran & Liu, 2011). And this is a serious and vital necessity for survival and success for newly established retail stores.

According to the available field information and research, another serious and important challenge faced by newly established retailers in the face of internal and external environmental factors is the lack of awareness of adopting a suitable strategy against financial management

trends, optimal control of costs and revenues (Kazungu et al., 2013). This issue is often caused by the lack of knowledge and understanding of adopting appropriate strategies against costs and revenues, making retailers more vulnerable to financial and economic risks. On the other hand, many newly established retailers in the early stages of their activity do not have a suitable strategy for how to do things, methods of dividing tasks, and decision-making processes in a scientific and practical way (Zia, 2014). This lack of information and experience can gradually cause inefficiency and instability in the use of available resources and budget. Unfortunately, such conditions over time can lead to a deeper collapse and collapse of their business. And create serious and significant problems for them, which ultimately not only affects their financial situation, but can also fuel bigger problems in the field of commercial competition.

In other words, any strategy that is adopted without considering internal and external environmental factors can lead them to the end of their business. Therefore, in order to survive in the ups and downs and challenging world of retail sales, these retailers must be well acquainted with various management strategies and different structures and theories. Strengthening these skills and knowledge will help them to better manage their resources and avoid possible risks that are some kind of internal and external environmental factors. According to the mentioned cases, another question arises in the mind in this section.

2) According to environmental factors (internal-external), what strategies should be adopted in newly established retail stores that will lead to survival and success?

In this regard, one of the best and most effective ways to reduce these existing challenges and obstacles is to model the experiences and successful practices of the actors in this sector of the market (Offerman & Sonnemans, 1998). Modeling, in the sense of intelligently using the best practices and strategies of leading institutions, can help to increase the probability of success of newly established businesses. As indicated in the research (Arifin et al., 2022; Lussier & Pfeifer, 2001), this process especially involves following the example of established and experienced businesses, which have been able to achieve significant success in challenging circumstances. On the other hand, by identifying

and overcoming challenges, it is possible to create new jobs and diverse opportunities and provide the basis for success.

Therefore, having a dynamic and systematic retail store that can operate effectively in the competitive market is highly needed by business owners and new entrants. Therefore, modeling successful people in this field, especially in situations where newly established businesses are looking for effective solutions, can be considered as a strong and logical reason to use the experiences and achievements of these companies and successful experts, because learning from the successes and failures of others makes the path smoother for them and helps them achieve their goals.

According to the existing and current research, the examination and resolution of these challenges in the physical retail stores in Saudi Arabia have not been carried out in a scientific and specialized manner, and in order to solve these problems, the owners of the retail stores often make decisions based on immediate thinking. For this reason, the evidence shows that these retail stores have not yet been able to meet the expectations of the stakeholders and achieve their strategic goals compared to other brand retail stores in this area. For this reason, newly established retail owners who are in the physical platform should quickly consider and be inspired by the patterns, methods and experiences of other retailers. This adaptation process not only requires time and capital, but smart strategies must be carefully adopted in order to survive in the competitive market.

Therefore, the purpose of the research is to identify successful strategies and patterns from reputable retailers in Saudi Arabia that help newly established retail stores to survive in today's competitive world from the time of establishment to the survival stage.

2. Theoretical Background and Questions

2.1 *The Components and Variables of the Time of Establishment and Its Relationship with Survival and Success*

The author of the research (Afolabi et al., 2023) emphasizes that the use of innovative human resource practices in the retail stages, such as continuous training and recognition systems, can help increase employee satisfaction and improve the quality of customer service. This satisfaction points to the importance of committed and loyal employees in attracting

and retaining customers and success in the competitive market, which is important for the survival of retail stores. Also, researchers (Ganesha & Aithal, 2020) show that choosing a strategic location to establish a retail store by considering factors such as traffic, accessibility, and proximity to competitors is critical for business success. On the other hand, research (Manhiwa et al., 2016) states that collaboration and networking are effective in the survival of retail stores and can help improve efficiency and attract more customers. A review (Doherty, 2007) shows that market entry strategies, including franchising or direct investment, are particularly important in the survival and sustainable success of businesses, and understanding the environmental impacts of these choices is critical. and research (Ullmer & Ha, 2006) emphasizes the importance of comprehensive market research to identify consumer needs and design effective strategies. And finally, the research (Nelson & Ratliff, 2005) points to the development of comprehensive marketing strategies in retail startups that help attract customers and increase brand awareness.

Considering the lack of comprehensive and complete researches in the past and at the present time, it is clearly clear that the existing researches in this field have not been able to accurately and comprehensively identify the key and effective components in the process of establishing retail stores. These components can serve as the foundation for survival and success in the retail sector in Saudi Arabia. For this reason, the first research question is formed in this direction to investigate and discover this unclear relationship.

RQ1: When establishing a retail store, which elements and variables should be considered so that it can be the basis of survival and success?

2.2 *Environmental Factors (Internal-External) and Its Relationship with the Adoption of Retail Strategies*

Research on environmental factors (Zhang et al., 2023) indicates that environmental factors in the market have deep and significant effects on the adoption of retail strategies; In particular, the environmental challenges posed by product returns add additional waste and transportation costs. Many retailers still ignore these strategies, indicating a gap in their environmental awareness and planning. To improve performance and increase stability in the market,

it is necessary to identify and evaluate these risks. Another research (Dankeyeva, O. M., 2022) shows that environmental factors, including economic, social, technical and legal aspects, have significant effects on retail operations, and changes in consumer behavior and technological developments can determine the path of strategic decisions. Research (Bozic, 2021) states that non-compliance with local market conditions can lead to poor performance and a decrease in market share, so the importance of formulating appropriate strategies and quick response to environmental changes is evident. Also, research (Rana & Shankar, 2020) states that during crises, retailers should develop strategies that help them through crises and crises that can strongly affect consumer behavior. Similarly, another research (Yu & Ramanathan, 2011) emphasizes that the dynamics of the business environment, increasing competition and rapid technological changes should be considered in reviewing and adapting the strategies of retailers. So that this adaptation helps to manage risk and take advantage of new opportunities in the market.

2.3 Retail Strategies and Its Relation to Survival and Success

In a research (Kazemi et al., 2024), this research examines the effective strategies used by Amazon to help emerging mixed and omnichannel retailers in the UAE. It highlights the importance of market selling to understand stakeholders and customer expectations, ultimately fostering loyalty. In another research (Dargah & Golrokhsari, 2012), it is pointed out that the implementation of customer relationship management systems helps retailers to create strong and sustainable relationships with customers, which is necessary to retain and attract new customers. And it affects the overall success of the business. Also, Susanto et al. (2023) emphasizes that implementing effective pricing strategies is necessary to create a strong retail brand image, as this has a direct impact on customers' purchasing decisions. Research (Abedi et al., 2014) shows that positive word-of-mouth marketing through excellent service and community involvement can help

attract and retain new customers and lead to retailers' continued success. Finally, Tan & Newman (2013) points out the importance of investing in continuous training of sales personnel and says that it helps to strengthen relationships with customers and improve sales performance, and regular evaluation of these programs is necessary to continue competing in the market.

Past surveys and studies show that there are no comprehensive and practical strategies for survival and success in newly established retail stores in Saudi Arabia, considering the environmental factors (internal-external). This lack of scientific and academic information indicates an important research gap that needs further investigation. Therefore, the second research question is asked to identify strategies aimed at survival and success in newly established retail stores.

RQ2: Considering environmental factors (internal-external), what strategies should be adopted in newly established retail stores that will lead to their survival and success?

3. Research Conceptual Model

Based on research objectives, specific questions, and gaps in previous studies, the authors have developed a conceptual model for their review. This model clearly outlines the key components of the research and serves as a map of the relationships within the study. This conceptual model, which serves as the central element guiding the research, effectively integrates important elements such as problem statement, literature review, goal setting, and question formulation. According to the conventional definitions in this field, the model should be designed in such a way that it is clear and precise and describes in detail all the steps, variables and tools necessary to achieve the research objectives. It coherently presents the relationships between the components and shows how to obtain clear and reasoned answers to the research questions. Basically, this conceptual model not only defines the structure of the research, but also rationalizes the approach to address the research issues.

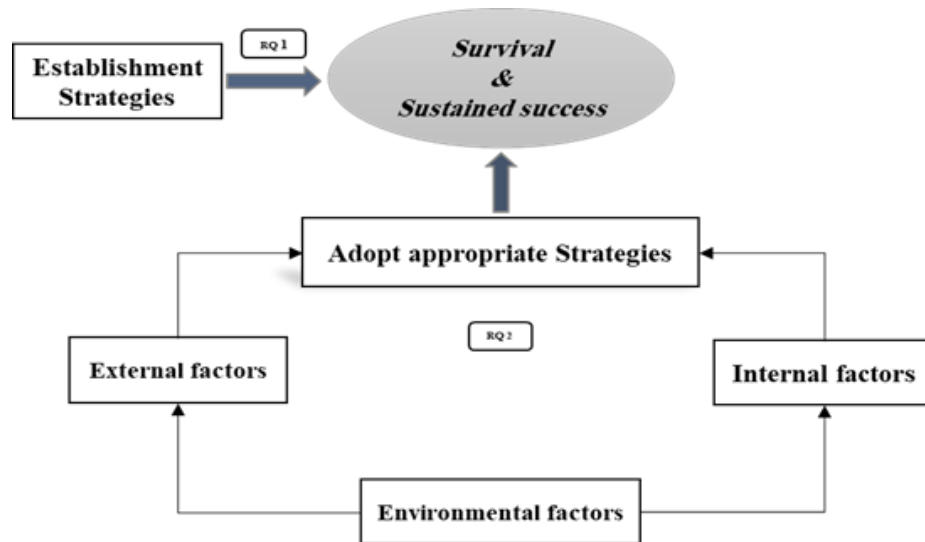


Figure 1. Conceptual model

4. Conceptual Theories and Connections

4.1 Retail Strategies Newly Established and Their Relationship to Survival and Success

Barney's theory (Barney, 2000) of resources and capabilities is significantly applied to retail startup strategies and success. New retailers should focus on developing unique resources that differentiate them from competitors, such as special products and a differentiated customer experience. Also, it is essential to strengthen inimitable resources such as a strong brand and close relationships with suppliers. Considering the criteria of value, rarity, imitability and substitutability, these retailers can develop strategies to identify opportunities and manage market threats. This approach helps to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage and success in the retail market.

4.2 Environmental Factors (Internal and External) and Their Impact on Retail Strategies

4.2.1 External Environmental Factors Affecting Retail Strategies

First, political and regulatory changes can strongly affect retail operations and require changes in sales and distribution strategies (Yang et al., 2018). Second, the economic situation — including recession and growth — and changes in consumer behavior must be carefully evaluated so that retailers can optimize their pricing and offers (INA SVILANE, 2024). Third, social norms and lifestyles of consumers have a direct impact on their purchase decisions, and retailers should apply being up-to-date with these changes in their promotional strategies

and products (Olawale et al., 2022). Finally, technological advances can create new experiences for customers and help improve operational efficiency, so retailers should always pay attention to the latest technologies (Yang et al., 2018).

4.2.2 Internal Environmental Factors and Effects on Retailing

Strong leadership and effective management strategies are key factors in the success of retail strategies (Otto et al., 2023), internal environmental factors are influenced by values and effective practices on customer experiences and employee performance. Understanding these factors is critical to strategic planning and risk management in retail, enabling retailers to respond effectively to changing conditions.

Unsystematic risks, caused by specific internal factors, significantly affect retail strategies, often more than systematic risks, especially due to financial challenges in the industry (Kiselakova et al., 2015). Recognizing and analyzing these unsystematic risks is essential because they can affect product and service performance (Hsu & Jang, 2008; Mokkelbost, 1971). Implementing structured risk management approaches, such as the PPRR model, can help retailers identify and reduce risks and increase their flexibility and strategic decision-making (Grosul & Usova, 2022). Integrating risk management into marketing strategies allows retailers to assess various risks during the strategy development process (Go, S. & Kozhevnikova, M., 2022).

5. Methodology

According to the type of realization questions and the purpose of the research, the exploratory qualitative approach was adopted as an effective research method in the fields of marketing and retail sales. This approach is known for its capabilities in describing emerging phenomena, evaluating deep meanings, clarifying subtle insights, and contributing to the development of very important and beneficial theory. In other words, qualitative research allows researchers to understand the issues in front of them more deeply and reach reliable results through valid data. This importance has been emphasized in various works such as (Alam, 2005; Brown & Dant, 2008; Petrescu & Lauer, 2017).

A qualitative approach usually requires conducting interviews and a detailed and systematic study that includes a systematic and structured field process. This process is divided into four main steps, which are: choosing the right participant and determining the context of the research, setting the interview protocol that should be designed in such a way that it will bring the best results, then collecting the data effectively and accurately. And finally, data analysis to extract significant information and

insights. These steps help to examine the desired phenomena in detail and allow researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the subjects they are studying. The points mentioned in various works such as the effects of (Alam, 2005; Sit et al., 2018) have also been clearly explained.

5.1 Selection of Retail Centers and Participants

In this research, physical retail stores with a history of more than 10 years were selected first. In this regard, we have selected 4 retail stores in Medina, Riyadh, Jeddah and Mecca as important and strategic cities in Saudi Arabia. Because we and numerous researches (Choe et al., 1997; PALI et al., 2011; Pupentsova et al., 2022) believe that large and strategic cities that have competition and economic vitality have much greater effects on retail sales. And these phenomena can directly and indirectly affect the performance and success of this type of business. We selected retail stores that operate in the field of clothing, personal accessories, food, and daily consumer goods. Because these retail sales are almost at the same level as the needs of the people in the community (Annett-Hitchcock & Xu, 2015). It is shown in detail in the Table 1.

Table 1. Specifications of retail centers

Retail store	City	Field of activity	Number of employees
Store A	Medina	Hypermarket — food	125
Store B	Jeddah	Daily consumer goods — personal items	110
Store C	Riyadh	Clothing — personal accessories	114
Store D	Mecca	Food — daily consumer goods	115

The second step in this research process included selecting, identifying and contacting relevant and appropriate participants who can be considered business experts. At this stage, we selected founders, marketing managers, strategists, future research managers in the field of retail based on key targeted research criteria to obtain a wide range of different opinions and experiences; These criteria included the breadth and depth of these people's retail experience, their strategic knowledge, and a deep understanding of the creation, management, or formation of an experienced retail strategy. Also, leadership in the design and implementation of experiences from establishment to retail survival was also one of the other features we emphasized.

Interviewing elites are considered as a suitable and effective method when specific knowledge and insight based on rich experiences and deep expertise are needed (Mogaji & Nguyen, 2023). This approach allows researchers to use the real and deep experiences of influential people to create useful and constructive interactions between researchers and industry practitioners. Over the past 2 decades, a large number of strategic management researchers have proposed various definitions of elite reporting. For clarity and more precision in our definition, we adhere to the definition (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019), which states: "Elite interviewees are key decision makers who have extensive and exclusive information and the ability to influence important company outcomes." Either

individually or jointly with others. This definition fits well with the characteristics of the people we selected. Our selected people worked in strategic roles and had rich experiences in the retail sector and especially in-depth strategies and approaches in retail stores. Their ability to provide deep and nuanced views brought results that were hardly possible to achieve through quantitative methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In this way, these people were able to provide us with insights that could be a good guide to better understand the research questions.

5.2 Size and Sample of the Study

Using various ethical methods and techniques, we were able to reach the target audience of retail stores. This information included email addresses and activities of people who were somehow connected with these stores. Then, by sending an email, we asked 31 people to participate in a research interview. In the initial email, we clearly explained the purpose of our research and noted the importance of their opinions and experiences. We also announced that this interview will be for half an hour and will not take much time from them. Our goal was to establish a friendly and professional relationship so that they feel more comfortable in accepting our invitation. This exchange of communication continued intermittently and we were able to receive positive feedback from some people with regular follow-ups. At this stage, we also made suggestions for the date and time of the interview, respecting their time. Gradually, we reached an agreement with them and determined the exact time and date of the interviews. These efforts led to the acceptance of 17 interviews with a response rate of 54.8%. This process helped us to proceed with more confidence and preparation towards conducting

interviews and benefit from their experiences and valuable opinions. Table 2 is described in detail.

Since sample size in qualitative research mainly focuses on the quality and adequacy of data and not only on quantity. According to the theories of Hennink & Kaiser (2022), there are no exact guidelines for determining the necessary sample size to achieve data saturation (Farah et al., 2019). Therefore, we followed the recommendations of (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022) and attempted to conduct 17 interviews to represent data saturation. This method is particularly convenient for relatively homogeneous populations and narrowly defined targets, and these conditions fully apply to our study. Finally, data saturation in our research was achieved after the completion of the 14th interview, when enough information had been collected and the continuation of more interviews did not add significant insight to the study (Baker et al., 2012; Guest et al., 2006). This phenomenon is completely consistent with the results of similar exploratory studies (Farah et al., 2019; Moore et al., 2022; Sit et al., 2018). Then, an information and consent form were designed and sent to each participant, which included a comprehensive explanation of the research objectives, the reason for choosing them, and our expectations from them. After that, the participants were asked to express their consent so that we could collect, record, analyze their responses and convey the obtained results in our research report. In accordance with ethical procedures related to research, we were committed to all principles of confidentiality and anonymity. This means that the names of people and retail stores in the text used were edited and completely replaced with pseudonyms. Which is shown in Table 2- P1-17.

Table 2. Information of the Interviewees

Interviewee	Information of the interviewee		Store information	
	Academic expertise	Role in the store	Type of store activity	City
P1	entrepreneur	Founder	Food — daily consumer goods	Mecca
P2	Marketing management	Marketing manager		
P3	strategic	Director of Future Research		
P4	Marketing management	strategist	Hypermarket — food	Medina
P5	International management	Founder		

P6	Entrepreneurship innovation	and	Director of Future Research		
P7	Policy management		Marketing manager		
P8	Human resource management		Human resources manager		
P9	International trade		Founder		
P10	International marketing		Marketing manager	clothing — Personal accessories	Riyadh
P11	Marketing		strategist		
P12	Innovation and entrepreneurship		Director of Future Research		
P13	Human resource management		Founder		
P14	Implementation control	and	Marketing manager	daily consumer goods — Personal accessories	Jeddah
P15	Marketing		strategist		
P16	Information technology		Director of Future Research		
P17	Financial management		Finance Manager		

5.3 Interview Protocol

This interview protocol was created with the aim of improving the quality of the collected data and subsequent analysis, and deals with deep analysis of research-related issues (Alam, 2005). Also, by clarifying the research objectives and key questions, it has a positive effect on the interview process and data analysis. This interview was designed in a semi-structured way to provide freedom of action for the participants and at the same time guide the conversation. Open-ended and guided questions are used to stimulate deep thinking and elicit comprehensive opinions (Silverman, 2024). The questions include pre-defined topics, along with space for new topics to be raised by the participants. This approach allowed us to face issues that may have been unimaginable at first and provide more detailed analyses. The atmosphere of the interview was provided in such a way as to help create a sense of security and comfort for the participants. This means that the interviewer was well trained and had the ability to conduct conversations in various situations and even pay attention to verbal and non-verbal cues. We used the technique of comparative analysis and continuous review of the results to identify and resolve possible inconsistencies. In a comprehensive and in-depth manner, this protocol has not only collected data and analyzed them, but has also

given importance to creating a space for dialogue and exchange of ideas.

5.4 Data Collection

In order to follow the conventional and accepted methods of conducting interviews with elites and experts in different fields, it was decided to maintain the semi-structured interview format. This decision was taken in order to create maximum flexibility and give the informants the opportunity to express their opinions and views freely and unconditionally through this semi-organizational structure (Alam, 2005). In this method, the answers of the interviewees determined the sequence of questions as well as the level of exploration in different topics. And they made it possible for the interviewers to deviate from the framework of the interview and address relevant and important topics that may not have been anticipated at first. The interviews were conducted in English and the duration of each interview was approximately half an hour. These interviews were conducted online and through screen, and all these conversations were audio recorded and saved. Then detailed transcripts were prepared from these recordings that were able to be compared with similar and related studies (Farah et al., 2019; Sit et al., 2018; Tyrväinen et al., 2020). It should be noted that most of the interviews took place between late 2023 and early 2024. To

increase the validity and guarantee the quality of the data, the prepared transcripts were returned to the participants so that they could confirm the correctness of the information provided and mention their points of interest (Alam, 2005). This process not only helped to improve the quality of the data, but also increased the validity of the research constructs. For this reason, all the components and collected information and data have been approved by the stakeholders.

5.5 Data Analysis

A reflexive thematic analysis method, as outlined by Clarke & Braun (2017), was thoughtfully used to allow for dynamic and iterative engagement with existing literature, ongoing data collection efforts, and ongoing interpretive processes. To ensure high validity and reliability, both authors carefully read and analyzed the interview transcripts and independently coded the data according to (Richards, 2020) guidelines. The coding strategy involved a comprehensive three-step process that initially used 14 deductive codes. In the second step, a hybrid approach including descriptive and conceptual coding techniques was adopted to preserve the integrity of the interviewees' opinions (Saldaña, 2021). The resultant codes with $\leq 15\%$ support (3 occurrences) was discounted or amalgamated with other similar codes. (Simplifying the analysis to focus on the most relevant data). Finally, the 81 unique codes were systematically grouped into 28 categories, which both authors agreed upon, thereby increasing the integrity of the analytical process (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019). Notably, no new codes or categories emerged during this thorough review, indicating that the data adequately addressed the phenomenon under study (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The thematic analysis process, detailed in a table in the findings section, demonstrated a systematic and thorough nature that contributed to theoretical development and supported content validity (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The findings will be presented and discussed in relation to the research questions raised in the next section of the study. To increase clarity and interpretive understanding, verbatim excerpts from the texts have been used, which not only illustrate the identified themes but also contribute to the overall credibility and validity of the research, as emphasized by (Hashimov, 2015; Patton, 1990). All analysis steps were performed by MAXQDA

software.

5.6 Quality Criteria

This study adheres to the proposed criteria and standards set by Fischer & Guzel (2023), emphasizing clarity in the evaluation of research quality. The aim of the research is to increase the transparency and connection between the findings and theoretical foundations by placing the study in the existing literature and formulating related questions. This clarity is established through detailed interview protocols, where transcripts are accurately recorded and verified by participants (Pratt et al., 2020). Objective coding of content improves reliability and potential reproducibility of research. Textual background is provided through detailed descriptions and quotations, minimizing researcher bias to ensure accurate representation of information. This study also seeks to conceptually reframe existing frameworks, highlighting insights that contribute to theoretical development. Finally, while the main goal of qualitative research is not to generalize, the origin of this value lies in the creation of deep and subjective insights that contribute to the formation of theory (Crick, 2021). We believe that conceptual transferability to a limited set of contexts should be clearly demonstrated. This, in turn, will strengthen the credibility of our study and show its strengths in this direction.

6. Findings

6.1 Findings of the First Question

6.1.1 Components and Variables of Retail Establishment Time

The findings related to the first question of the research can be clearly seen in Table 3 and it well represents the commitment of the experts to the initial goal setting at the time of establishment. This goal setting is formed in the form of the organization's mission and vision, and experts emphasize the importance of these two issues, because both aspects can clearly define the organization's existential philosophy. This point is in line with the confirmation of the research (Anitsal et al., 2013; Vongariyajit & Kantabutra, 2021) and shows that the answers provided by the experts are accurate and correct. On the other hand, the findings show that experts pay special attention to market analysis at the time of establishment; Because they have come to the conclusion that conducting a comprehensive analysis of the market can provide them with a

deep understanding of how and the existing trends as well as the conditions governing the market. This attention to the importance of

market analysis has also been clearly confirmed and emphasized in research (Adeleke et al., 2024; Vandell & Carter, 1994).

Table 3. Findings of the first question-A

Interviewee	Key theme	Categories	Codes with frequency of occurrence	Connection with previous research
P1-P3-P7-P9-P14-P16	Formulating mission and vision	Determining goals	Short term (5)	(Anitsal et al., 2013; Vongariyajit & Kantabutra, 2021)
		Product-service	Long term (5)	
		Identification and selection of sales strategies	Policy to implement and control strategies (4)	
P2-P4-P5-P6-P8-P10-P12-P13-P14-P15-P17	Market analysis	SWOT	Check needs (9)	(Adeleke et al., 2024; Vandell & Carter, 1994)
			Identification of target market demand (11)	
			Competitors identification (8)	
			Analysis of target customer trends (12)	
		Market financial analysis	Forecasting income and expenses (7)	
		Identification of suppliers-Supply chain	Conclusion of flexible contracts (7)	

6.1.2 Marketing and Preparation to Enter the Market and the Arena of Competition

But the remarkable thing is that the experts paid more attention to the issue of the marketing plan and emphasized it implicitly and initially. They believe that there should be at least a basic marketing plan at the time of designing and planning to establish a store. The issue that is very interesting is that the experts have mentioned the location and location of the store

as a strategic and key issue. As far as the issue of traffic and traffic is concerned, they were very careful and emphasized that the right choice of store location should pass through various filters. This selection process should be done in such a way that the best place to set up the store is identified and selected. On the other hand, licenses for business activities were mentioned as priorities of legal procedures.

Table 4. Findings of the First Question-B

Interviewee	Key theme	Categories	Codes with frequency of occurrence	Connection with previous research
P1-P3-P4-P7-P9-P10-P12-P13-P16	Marketing	Advertising	Choosing the type of primary advertisement (7)	(Blessa, 2015; Kita et al., 2023; Li, 2023; Moutinho, 2000)
			Choosing an advertising method (9)	
		Checking the	High consumption product low consumption (6)	

		selection of products		
		Identity design	Choosing a logo and brand name (5)	
P2-P4-P5-P5-P7-P10-P12-P14-P16-P17	Choose a location	target community	Identifying the economic status of people in the store area (14)	
			Demographics- the number of people in the area within the range (8)	
		Location index and passage	Location access to customers (9)	
			Rental fees (6)	
		Number of competitors in the region	traffic index (10)	
			Effective competitors (5)	
		Ineffective competitors (5)		
P2-P4-P5-P6-P8-P10-P12-P13-P14-P15-P17	Essential needs	Equipment	Shop (4)	
			Personnel (7)	
			Service (6)	
			Railing to import technology and technology (5)	
		Store design	Decoration (8)	

6.1.3 Committed and Expert Human Resources for a Purposeful Start

But the important question is, which person or people should carry out this volume of primary and secondary activities? The answer to this question shows that expert human resources can play a very important role as the promoter and

guide of all goals and programs. With their capabilities, they can lead to the survival and success of a business complex. These results clearly support previous researches (Greer, 2021; Tan & Newman, 2013) that have addressed this issue.

Table 5. Findings of the First Question-C

Interviewee	Key theme	Categories	Codes with frequency of occurrence	Connection with previous research
P2-P6-P7-P9-P10-P12-P15-P17	Human resource management	Elaboration of organizational culture framework	Dos and don'ts (5)	(Greer, 2021; Tan & Newman, 2013)
		Targeted recruitment in all departments	Recruitment-monitoring -to preserve (8)	
			Training (7)	
		Compilation of the framework of the duties of employees	At what time? (3)	
			In which part? (3)	

6.2 The Findings of the Second Question

Environmental Factors

6.2.1 Identify Survival Strategies According to

The findings of the second question deals with

the key requirements for survival and success in newly established retail stores and also introduces the main dimensions such as the kaizen approach, financial monitoring and crisis management through the formation of working groups, according to the environmental factors. Paying attention to customer needs and analyzing environmental factors helps improve the customer experience, while the Kaizen Theory leads to continuous improvement and up- skilling of employees. Financial monitoring and cost optimization also help to increase profit margins and clarify processes. In addition, the formation of working groups and crisis management help to identify threats and create

a culture of cooperation, so that retailers will be able to face market challenges and crises effectively. In general, these strategies lead to the creation of a strong and stable organizational structure that contributes to the success and survival of businesses. On the other hand, the results showed that creating value and competitive advantage through round-the-clock services, flexible pricing, and providing purchase incentives. It helps to attract and retain customers. Also, customer orientation and creating a friendly and supportive atmosphere in the store improves the shopping experience and increases customer loyalty.

Table 6. Findings of the Second Question-A

Interviewee	Key theme	Categories	Codes with frequency of occurrence	Connection with previous research
P2-P6-P9-P12-P15-P16	Kaizen Theory	Every day is better than yesterday	Codified training in how to sell and service (4)	(Marques & de Carvalho, 2021; Silva et al., 2021; Stergiou, 2022)
			codified meetings and following up on customer expectations (5)	
			Applying small changes in layout and observing their effect on customer behavior (3)	
			Continuous improvement of staff skills (5)	
			Layout optimization (5)	
			Improvement in the purchasing process (4)	
			Identify and eliminate unnecessary steps (3)	
			Paying attention to the customer and following expectations (6)	
P1-P2-P6-P7-P9-P10-P12-P13-p16-P17	Creation of a working group	Crisis management	Getting specific feedback from customers (4)	(Assael, 1968; Takupiwa & Shelfa, 2019; Velmurugan et al., 2020)
			Use of complications group (6)	
			Forming a working group of conditions and forecasting challenges (4)	
P1-P3-P5-P7-P9-P10-P11-P14-p16-P17	Creating value	Creating an external competitive	Formation of conflict management working group (5)	(Sivalakshmi et al., 2024; Verma &
			7/24(5) availability	
			Flexibility in pricing and service (9)	
			Create a shopping cart with constant	

advantage	discounts (7)	Roshani, 2022) (Ibrahim et al., 2022)
	Customer orientation (8)	
	Shopping incentives with small gifts (4)	
	Respecting customers from entry to exit (10)	
	A strategy to pay attention to minors in the store (3)	
	Giving advice to customers (4)	
	Store security (7)	
internal	Using new technology when buying and selling products (6)	

6.2.2 Using Strategic Tools to Stay in the Market

The in-depth look of experts in this section attracts attention. According to the academic view of their experts, the use of competitive intelligence as a catalyst and environmental analysis with the PESTEL model allows managers to quickly react to market changes and make better strategic decisions with SWOT analysis. In this regard, observing government

laws and policies, paying attention to economic and demographic conditions, and using new technologies will help improve sales processes and operational efficiency. Overall, these strategies provide a solid foundation for the survival and success of retail startups. All these factors have been confirmed in previous research.

Table 7. Findings of the Second Question-B

Interviewee	Key theme	Categories	Codes with frequency of occurrence	Connection with previous research
P1-P4-P5-P8-P9-P11-P13-p16-P17	Marketing	Using competitive intelligence	Continuous monitoring of competitors (7)	(Hermansyah, 2024; Latour, 2021; Yanti & Maradjabesy, 2023)
			Continuous monitoring of conditions (8)	
		Advertising	Creating a telephone sales channel (5)	
			Advertising penetration in local social networks (6)	
		Using the SWOT tool	Competitors – market (9)	
			Examining the impact of government laws and regulations on retail activities (3)	
		Every 6 months PESTEL use	Investigating the economic situation of the region (4)	
			Customer behavior analysis (6)	
			Attention to demographic changes (4)	
			Utilizing new technologies to improve sales processes (5)	

			Ensuring compliance with all retail rules and regulations (6)	
			Examining the impact of government laws and regulations on retail activities (3)	
			Taxes, tariffs and government support (3)	
			unemployment rate, and the purchasing power of customers to determine the appropriate pricing strategy (5)	
			Understanding the needs, desires and consumption patterns of customers to improve the shopping experience (4)	
			Identifying changes in population structure and adapting to different needs of customers (3)	
			Inventory management systems and CRM software (7)	
			Consumer rights and labor laws (4)	
			Awareness of taxes, tariffs and government support (5)	
			Knowing the unemployment rate, and purchasing power of customers to determine the appropriate pricing strategy (4)	
P2-P3-P6-P9-P10-P13-P15-p16	Financial monitoring	Cost leadership	Better purchasing strategy from supplier - better selling (8)	(Hanrahan, 2019)
			Constant monitoring of the most suitable supplier of goods in order to buy better (7)	
			Save on consumable parts (5)	
		Audit codified	profit and loss (5)	
P1-P4-P5-P8-P9-P10-P11-P12-p14-P17	Environmental protection	Using sustainable methods — waste management	Employee hygiene Sanitation of the place (10)	(Sivagnanasundaram, 2018)

7. Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 Developing a Mission and Vision Is a Step for Survival and Success

The choice of strategy in formulating the organizational mission and vision as well as setting strategic goals for new retail stores clearly emphasizes its importance. The analysis obtained from the research (Anitsal et al., 2013; Vongariyajit & Kantabutra, 2021) shows that

these steps are not only a key component in the startup process, but also have a significant impact on the survival and success of these businesses. Especially in today's competitive and changing markets, having a strong and differentiating identity defined through mission and vision helps create strategic direction. In addition, the emphasis on setting short-term goals has helped to establish stability in the early stages of the stores' activities, and

long-term goals as a strategic road map determine the future direction of the business. Therefore, the precise formulation of the mission, vision and strategic goals as the basis of success in newly established retail stores plays a central role in ensuring the survival and sustainable development of these types of businesses.

7.2 Preparation of Equipment and Rail to Continue the Work

We realized that the choice of strategy is necessary in the initial identification of essential needs and attention to technical and operational aspects in the process of launching and developing a business from the point of view of experts. The results of this research and other researches indicate that the detailed analysis of key elements such as providing equipment (Parmar, 2022; Sachdeva & Goel, 2015; Wu et al., 2020), recruiting and training personnel (Greer, 2021; Tan & Newman, 2013), and providing services tailored to customer needs plays a vital role in optimizing store performance and improving customer satisfaction. Also, the introduction of new technologies into this process makes it possible to improve business models and increase efficiency in services and sales. The use of inventory management systems and analytical technologies helps retailers to better forecast demand and respond to changing market needs. These cases have been investigated and confirmed in research (Sardar et al., 2024).

7.3 Advantages of a Strategic Location for Retail Survival

Based on interviews with experts, we found that the strategy of choosing a strategic location for newly established retail stores is a key factor for the survival and success of these businesses. Geographical location has a significant impact on the accessibility of customers and thus on the store's revenue and profitability. Factors such as access to main routes, public transport stations and parking space are necessary to attract customers and increase traffic. Also, the interior design and layout of the store also play a very important role in the customer's shopping experience, which can lead to the attraction and retention of customers. The research results (Mohd Roslin & Rosnan, 2012; Wieland, 2017; Witek-Hajduk & Grudecka, 2018) support and emphasize that these factors are must for business survival. As a result, creating an attractive and user-friendly environment along

with the use of modern equipment and trained personnel, not only increases the ability of retail stores in the competition, but also effectively helps their survival and growth.

7.4 Kaizen Theory Is a Strategic Component to Improve All Departments

One of the key strategies to achieve survival and success is Kaizen theory, which emphasizes continuous improvement. According to Marques & de Carvalho (2021), Silva et al. (2021), Stergiou (2022), this theory helps retail managers to improve internal processes and increase the quality of customer service, thereby strengthening their competitiveness. Initial employee training is designed to develop sales and customer service skills and uses a variety of training methods and simulations of real scenarios. Holding regular meetings to evaluate customer expectations and using digital tools to collect feedback are among the critical things in evaluating service quality.

On the other hand, making small and effective changes in the layout of the store can help attract customers and increase sales. Also, optimizing the shopping process using technology, such as mobile payments, enhances the shopping experience. Continuous attention to customer needs and feedback should be prioritized in retail strategies. Implementing a customer relationship management (CRM) system can provide valuable insights into customer behavior and preferences that help managers make strategic decisions. Finally, approaches based on Kaizen theory bring positive and sustainable effects in the retail world. These strategies will not only help improve current performance, but also lay the groundwork for future innovation and adaptability to rapid market changes.

7.5 Attention to Health and Environmental Protection — A Service for Public Health

Choosing strategies with regard to internal and external environmental factors in newly established retail businesses in relation to environmental and public health issues is necessary as a competitive advantage. As public awareness of environmental issues increases, consumers are looking for brands that value sustainability and social responsibility. Implementing waste management procedures and optimizing the use of resources can increase efficiency and reduce costs. Strong environmental policies can increase the

attraction of customers who care about these issues. In addition, hygiene in retail has become a key factor in attracting and retaining customers, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Retailers should create a safe shopping environment and be transparent about hygiene procedures to strengthen customer trust and loyalty. The opinions of researchers (Dabija et al., 2018; Sahinaslan et al., 2021) support this issue in this regard.

7.6 Successively Supervision, Strategy for Future Decisions

Supplier monitoring and evaluation strategies, along with regular audits of financial statements, enable management to make better decisions based on financial and market data. On the other hand, innovation in marketing, especially in the field of digital and e-commerce, helps to attract and retain customers and thus increases operational efficiency. Finally, these approaches not only help to create a stable financial structure and increase the profit margin, but also lead to the continuity and long-term success of these businesses. These strategies are purposefully mentioned in the research (Makarov, V., 2024).

7.7 Forming a Working Group Is a Way to Prevent Conflicts and Crises

On the other hand, the strategy is to form operational groups and crisis management teams that help retailers actively monitor the environment and identify risks and opportunities. Using analytical and research tools to gather information allows these teams to develop appropriate solutions. Also, creating intra-organizational conflict management groups helps to promote a collaborative culture and increase communication and team morale. Improving internal cooperation not only strengthens the efficiency and flexibility of the organization, but also increases the ability of retailers to deal with market crises. As a result, these management strategies lead to a stronger organizational structure that is directly related to the success and sustainable growth of businesses, enabling new retailers to operate effectively in today's competitive and changing market and become a sustainable market model. Thus, adopting such an approach is considered as the key to success in turbulent and dynamic market environments. The importance of this issue has been emphasized in research (Velmurugan et al., 2020).

7.8 Competitive Advantage and Becoming Valuable — Depending on the Comprehensive Attention to the Customers

According to research (Sivalakshmi et al., 2024; Verma & Roshani, 2022), creating a competitive advantage is necessary to attract and retain customers, especially through 24-hour availability and flexible pricing. Retailers can increase customer appeal with strategies such as permanent discounts and incentives such as small gifts, strengthening emotional connections and offering significant benefits in highly competitive markets. These factors are in line with research (Lakshman & Faiz, 2021) and can be supported.

Customer-centric approaches improve shopping experiences and loyalty and strongly influence repeat purchase behavior. Additionally, focusing on younger customers and providing consultative services promotes a supportive shopping environment that leads to positive customer perceptions and memorable experiences. Implementing security measures and modern technologies not only increases operational efficiency, but also increases customer satisfaction, as successful retailers use technology to provide faster and more comprehensive service. These topics are related to research (Lakshman & Faiz, 2021). Overall, the strategic combination of these elements can lead to sustainable competitive advantages, enabling the success and growth of new retail businesses while strengthening brand-customer relationships and fostering long-term loyalty. On the other hand, from the perspective of (Kazemi & Soltani, 2024), competitive intelligence can act as a component and a catalyst in businesses.

7.9 PESTEL Is a Strategic Tool from Start to Development

The strategy of using management tools based on comprehensive and accurate analysis of internal and external environmental factors, using the PESTEL model, is considered vital for the survival and success of newly established retail businesses. This approach includes the assessment of political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal aspects that help managers to design appropriate and appropriate responses while identifying opportunities and threats. Understanding government policies and economic analysis allows retailers to effectively adjust their pricing and marketing strategies and take advantage of

demographic and consumption changes. The importance of this issue has been stated in several studies (Nurfauziyah & Khalid, 2024). Using tools such as SWOT analysis and investing in new technologies also helps to improve operational processes and increase efficiency. Therefore, adopting a comprehensive approach that includes all these elements helps to strengthen the survival and success of newly established retailers in complex and competitive environments and allows them to survive by quickly adapting to market changes. As a result, this strategy serves as a practical roadmap for early-stage retailers.

8. Contribution and Practical Implications

This research significantly adds to the retailing literature and focuses on a significant research gap related to insufficient attention to market exit in the early stages of retail business startups. According to the previous researches that have only sporadically dealt with this issue, this research identifies and examines the environmental factors affecting newly established retail in this field. Since retail success is highly dependent on market conditions and business environment, accurate identification of these factors can help form effective and adaptable strategies. This issue has been repeatedly emphasized in research (Dankeyeva, O. M., 2022). This research (Afdi & Purwanggono, 2018) shows that identifying the requirements and prohibitions in the process of setting up retail can significantly reduce the risk of failure and exit from the market. Considering that the research is based on reliable data and methodologies, the reliability of its results increases. In addition, identifying and analyzing key patterns and strategies in the stages of setting up and continuing retail activities allows investors to increase their chances of survival with a rational and less risky approach. This research identifies a list of essential variables and components at the time of establishment and provides appropriate survival strategies according to environmental factors. Considering the statistics of exit from the market and bankruptcy in this sector and the lack of local and specialized information, this research is of special importance in terms of subject, methodology and geography. The results of the research can be of great help to retailers and investors who plan to set up retail stores and help economic development and improve the conditions of small businesses, as well as

provide more accurate estimates of risks.

9. Research Limitations and Outlook

One of the limitations could be the limited sample size that was conducted in this study with only 17 respondents and may not convey enough diversity in different opinions and experiences, which harms the generalization of the results to larger populations. In addition, the limited geographic coverage and focus on large Saudi cities may not provide a comprehensive understanding of retail characteristics in other regions, especially smaller cities and rural areas. Also, the qualitative approach used in this research could lead to potential biases in data collection, as respondents' opinions may be influenced by their personal experiences or opinions. Other limitations include the lack of cultural diversity, as by focusing on specific regions, different cultures and consumer preferences that influence retail strategies may be overlooked. Finally, not using quantitative methods in the analysis of the findings can damage the deep and accurate analysis of the results and prevent the accurate evaluation of the effectiveness of the components.

Since we considered from the establishment stage to the survival stage in the market, the results of this research are useful until the survival stage. Because we have conducted the research based on the study gap in Saudi Arabia and the importance of the subject in this regard. Therefore, for the next steps, it is suggested to conduct other research in this direction. It is suggested that researchers strengthen the results by increasing the number of interviewees and including respondents from different cities and villages, and also use a mixed approach. Applying qualitative and quantitative methods in a combined manner can lead to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the market and customer reactions. Research in the field of studying in different cultures and conducting comparative analysis between retail strategies in different regions can also help to identify global or local patterns. Since we have discussed up to the survival stage, other researchers can examine the continuation of the retail path from survival to branding stages in the global community. Also, studying the impact of macroeconomic factors on retail strategies, as well as investigating the impact of new technologies such as e-commerce and social media, can lead to a better understanding of retail challenges and opportunities in different

environments. By implementing these suggestions, a field is provided for researchers to achieve more achievements in this field and help to expand the existing knowledge. We suggest that the researchers carry out research in other retail stores in the continuation of this literature or continue this research area in a specialized way in a specific product.

Funding

I, the author of this research, have not received any financial support from any organization or institution. I have decided to conduct this research solely based on our expertise and experience in the field of retailing, as well as relying on the latest information and relevant achievements in this field.

CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

Farzad Kazemi: Conceptualization, Software, Writing original draft, Formal analysis, Methodology, Review & editing, Resources.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

The article does not involve any studies with human participants or animals conducted by the authors.

Acknowledgment

We sincerely thank and appreciate all the managers and experts active in the field of retail in Saudi Arabia who participated in the interviews and shared their valuable opinions with us. It was very important for us to use their experiences and knowledge in order to improve the quality of research, and we are especially grateful for this.

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